

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## BLACK SHEEP!

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LAND AT LAST," "KISSING THE ROD," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER III. THE PHILISTINES.

THE cold weather, which in the country produced rugged roads and ice-bound ponds; which frosted the leafless branches of the trees with a silver tint, and gave a thousand different fantastic but ever lovely hues and shapes to nature; had no such pleasant refreshing effect in London, where the frost, ere three hours old, was beaten into mud under foot, ran drizzling in dirty streams from house-tops, and subsided into rain and fog before the daylight had disappeared. The day succeeding that on which George Dallas had entered the town of Amherst was a thorough specimen of what London can do when put to its worst. It was bad in the large thoroughfares where the passing crowds jostled each other ill temperedly, digging at each other's umbrellas, and viciously contesting every inch of foot pavement, where the omnibus wheels revolved amid mud-ruts, and every passing cab-horse produced a fountain of slush and spray. But it was even worse in the by-streets, where an attempt at sweeping had been made, where the mud lay in a thick slimy, shiny tide between the narrow ridges of footpath, where the tall houses, so close together that they completely filtered the air and light and retained nothing but the darkness and the dirt, were splashed with mud to their first-floor windows, and whose inhabitants or visitors desirous of crossing the road had to proceed to the junction with the main street, and, after tacking across in comparative cleanliness, commence their descent on the opposite side.

In the front room of the first floor of a house in such a street, South Molton-street, connecting Oxford-street the plebeian, with Brook-street the superb, just as the feeble glimmer of daylight which had vouchsafed itself during the day was beginning to wax even feebler, previous to its sudden departure, a man sat astride a chair, sunk in thought. He had apparently just entered, for he still wore his hat and overcoat, though the former was pushed to the back of his head, and the latter thrown negligently open. He was a tall handsome man, with keen black eyes glancing sharply, with thick black brows, a long straight

nose, thin tight lips unshrouded by moustache or beard, and a small round chin. He had full flowing black whiskers, and the blue line round his mouth showed that the beard was naturally strong; had he suffered it to grow, he might have passed for an Italian. As it was, there was no mistaking him for anything but an Englishman—darker, harder-looking than most of his race, but an Englishman. His face, especially round the eyes, was flushed and marked and lined, telling of reckless dissipation. There was a something not exactly fast, but yet slangy, in the cut of his clothes and in the manner in which he wore them; his attitude as he sat at the window with his hands clasped in front of him over the back rail of his chair, his knees straight out and his feet drawn back, as a man sits a horse at a hunt, was in its best aspect suggestive of the mess-room: in its worst, of the billiard-room. And yet there was an indescribable something in the general aspect of the man, in the very ease of his position, in the shape of the hands clasped in front of him, in the manner, slight as it was, in which now and again he would turn on his chair and peer back into the darkness behind him, by which you would have known that he had had a refined education, and had been conversant with the manners of society.

Nor would you have been wrong. In Burke's Landed Gentry, the Rouths of Carr Abbey take up their full quota of pages, and when the county election for Herefordshire comes off, the liberal agent is forced to bring to bear all the science he can boast of, to counteract the influence which the never-failing adhesion of the old family throws into the Tory scale. Never having risen, never for an instant having dreamed of demeaning themselves by rising, above the squirearchy, owners of the largest and best herds in all that splendid cattle-breeding county, high-sheriffs and chairmen of quarter-sessions as though by prescriptive right, perpetual presidents of agricultural societies, and in reality taking precedence immediately after the lord-lieutenant, the Rouths of Carr Abbey, from time immemorial, have sent their sons to Oxford, and their daughters to court, and have never, save in one instance, had to blush for their children.

Save in one instance. The last entry in the old family Bible of Carr Abbey is erased by a thick black line. The old squire speaks habitually

of "My only son, William;" and should a stranger, dining at the Abbey, casually refer to the picture, by Lawrence, of two little boys, one riding a pony, the younger decking a dog's neck with ribbon, he is, if the squire has not heard his question, motioned in dumb show to silence, or is replied to by the squire himself that "that boy is—lost, sir."

That boy, Stewart Routh, the man looking out of the window in South Molton-street, was captain of the boat at Eton, and first favourite, for a time, both with the dons and undergraduates at Oxford. Rumours of high play at cards developing into fact of perpetually sported "oak," non-attendance at chapel, and frequent shirking of classes, lessened the esteem in which Mr. Routh was held by the authorities; and a written confession handed to the dean, after being obtained by parental pressure, from Mr. Albert Grüntz, of Christ Church, son of and heir to Mr. Jacob Grüntz, sugar-baker, of St. Mary Axe, in the city of London, and Balmoral-gardens, Hyde Park, a confession to the effect that he, Mr. A. Grüntz, had lost the sum of two thousand pounds to Mr. S. Routh, at a game played with dice, and known as French hazard, procured the dismissal of Mr. S. Routh from the seat of learning. At Carr Abbey, whither he retired, his stay was shortened by the arrival of another document from Oxford, this time signed by Lord Hawkhurst, gentleman commoner of Christ Church, and Arthur Wardroper of Balliol, setting forth that Mr. S. Routh, while playing hazard in Mr. Grüntz's rooms, had been caught there *in flagrante delicto* in the act of cheating by "securing," i.e. retaining in his fingers, one of the dice which he should have shaken from the box. It was the receipt of this letter that caused the squire to make the erasure in the family Bible, and to look upon his youngest son as dead.

Driven from the paternal roof, Mr. Stewart Routh descended upon the pleasant town of Boulogne, whence, after a short stay not unmarked by many victories over the old and young gentlemen who frequent the card-tables at the *Établissement des Bains*, from whom he carried off desirable trophies, he proceeded to the baths and gambling-houses of Ems, Homburg, and Baden-Baden. It was at the last-mentioned place, and when in the very noon and full tide of success, that he was struck down by a fever, so virulent that the affrighted servants of the hotel refused to wait upon him. No nurse could be prevailed upon to undertake to attend him; and he would have been left to die for want of proper care, had not a young Englishwoman, named Harriet Creswick, travelling in the capacity of nursery-governess to Lord de Mauleverer's family (then passing through Baden on their way to winter in Rome), come to the rescue. Declaring that her countryman should not perish like a dog, she there and then devoted herself to attendance on the sick man. It need scarcely be told that Lady de Mauleverer, protesting against "such extraordinary

conduct," intimated to Miss Creswick that her connexion with her noble charges must cease at once and for ever. But it is noteworthy that in such a man as Stewart Routh had hitherto proved himself, a spirit of gratitude should have been so strongly aroused, that when his sense and speech returned to him, in weak and faltering accents he implored the woman who had so tenderly nursed him through his illness, to become his wife. It is quite needless to say that his friends, on hearing of it, averred, some that he thought he was going to die, and that it did not matter to him what he did, while it might have pleased the young lady; others, that he was a particularly knowing card whose brains had never deserted him, even when he was at his worst, and that he had discovered in Harriet Creswick a woman exactly fitted, by physical and mental qualifications, efficiently to help him as his partner in playing the great game of life. Be it as it may—and people will talk, especially in such circles—the fact remains that on his sick couch at the *Hollandischer Hof*, Baden-Baden, Stewart Routh proposed to Harriet Creswick, and was accepted; that so soon as he could safely be left, she departed for England; and that within a month they were married in London.

Of that one event at least in all his eventful life, Stewart Routh had never repeated. Through all his vicissitudes of fortune his wife had been by his side, and, as in the long run, chance had been against him, taking the heaviest portion of his burden on herself. Harriet Routh's was an untiring, undying, unquestioning love or worship of her husband. The revelation of his—to say the least of it—loose mode of life, the shifts and expedients to which he resorted for getting money, the questionable company in which he habitually lived, would have told with fatal effect on a devotion less thorough, a passion more transient. Harriet herself, who had been brought up staidly at an Institution, which she had only quitted to join the family with whom she was travelling when she arrived at Baden—Harriet herself at first shrunk back stunned and stupefied by the revelations of an unknown life which burst upon her a few days after her marriage. But her love bore her through it. As the dyer's hand assimilates to that it works in, so gradually did Harriet Routh endue herself with her husband's tone, temper, and train of thought, until, having become almost his second self, she was his most trusted ally, his safest counsellor in all the strange schemes by which he made out life. In the early days after their marriage she had talked to him once, only once, and then but for a few minutes, of reformation, of something better and more reputable, of doing with less money, to be obtained by the exercise of his great talents in some legitimate manner. And her husband, with the nearest approach to harshness that before or since he had ever assumed, told her that his time for that kind of thing was past and gone for ever, that she must forget all

the childish romance that they had taught her at the Institution, that she must sink or swim with him, and be prepared to cast in her lot with that kind of existence which had become his second nature, and out of which he could never hope to move. Even if he could move from it, he added, he did not think that he would wish to do so, and there must be an end to the matter.

There was an end to the matter. From that time forth, Harriet Routh buried her past, buried her former self, and devoted herself, soul and body, to her husband. Her influence over him strengthened with each year that they lived together, and was traceable in many little ways. The fact once faced, that their precarious livelihood was to be earned by the exercise of sharpness superior to that enjoyed by those with whom they were brought into contact, Harriet laid herself out at once for the fulfilment of her new duties, and in a very short time compelled her husband's surprised laudation of the ease and coolness with which she discharged them. There were no other women in that strange society; but if there had been, Harriet would have queened it over them, not merely by her beauty, but by her bright spirit, her quick appreciation, her thorough readiness to enter exactly into the fancy of the moment. The men who lost their money to Routh and his companion, treated her not merely with a punctilio which forbade the smallest verbal excess, but treated their losses with comparative good humour so long as Mrs. Routh was present. The men who looked up to Routh as the arch concocter of and prime mover in all their dark deeds, had a blind faith in her, and their first question, on the suggestion of any scheme, would be "what Mrs. Routh thought of it." Ah, the change, the change! The favourite pupil of the Institution, who used to take such close notes of the sermon on Sunday mornings, and illustrate the chaplain's meaning with such apposite texts from other portions of Scripture, as quite to astonish the chaplain himself, which perhaps was not to be wondered at, as the chaplain (a bibulous old gentleman, who had been appointed on the strength of his social qualities by the committee, who valued him as "a parson, you know, without any nonsense about him") was in the habit of purchasing his discourses ready made, and only just ran them through on Saturday nights. The show pupil of the Institution, who did all kinds of arithmetical problems "in her head," by which the worthy instructors meant without the aid of paper and pencil—the staid and decorous pupil of the Institution, who, when after her last examination she was quitting the table loaded with prizes—books—was called back by the bishop of the diocese, who with feeble hands pinned a silver medal on to her dress, and said, in a trembling voice, "I had nearly forgotten the best of all. This is in testimony of your excellent conduct, my dear." What was become of this model miss? She was utilising her talents in a different way. That was all. The memory which had enabled her to

summarise and annotate the chaplain's sermons now served as her husband's note-book, and was stored with all kinds of odd information, "good things" to "come off," trials of horses, names and fortunes of heirs who had just succeeded to their estates, lists of their most pressing debts, names of the men who were supposed to be doubtful in money matters, and with whom it was thought inexpedient to bet or play—all these matters dwelt in Harriet Routh's brain, and her husband had only to turn his head and ask, "What is it, Harry?" to have the information at once. The arithmetical quickness stood her in good stead, in the calculation of odds on all kinds of sporting events, on the clear knowledge of which the success of most of Routh's business depended; and as for the good conduct—well, the worthy bishop would have held up his hands in pious horror at the life led by the favourite pupil of the Institution, and at her surroundings; but against Mrs. Routh, as Mrs. Routh, as the devoted, affectionate, self-denying, spotless wife, the veriest ribald in all that loose crew had never ventured to breathe a doubt.

Devoted and affectionate! See her now as she comes quietly into the room—a small compact partridge of a woman with deep blue eyes in a very pale face, with smooth shining light brown hair falling on either side in two long curls, and gathered into a clump at the back of her head, with an impertinent nose only just redeemed from being a snub, with a small mouth, and a very provoking patable chin. See how she steals behind her husband, her dark linsley dress draping her closely and easily, and not making the slightest rustle; her round arm showing its symmetry in her tight sleeve twining round his neck; her plump shapely hand resting on his head; her pale cheek laid against his face. Devoted and affectionate! No simulation here.

"Anything gone wrong, Stewart?" she asked, in a very sweet voice.

"No, dear. Why?" said Routh, who was now sitting at a table strewn with papers, a pen in his right hand, and his left supporting his handsome worn face.

"You looked gloomy, I thought; but, if you say so, it's all right," returned his wife, cheerfully, leaving his side as she spoke, and proceeding to sweep up the hearth, put on fresh coals, and make the whole room look comfortable, with a few rapid indefinable touches. Then she sat down in a low chair by the fire, perfectly still, and turned her calm pale face to her husband with a business-like air. He made some idle scratches with his pen in silence, then threw it down, and, suddenly pushing away his chair, began to walk up and down the room with long light strides.

"What do you make of Deane, Harriet?" he said, at length, stopping for a moment opposite his wife, and looking closely at her.

"How do you mean? In character or in probabilities? As regards himself, or as regards us?"

"Well, both. I cannot make him out; he is so confoundedly cool, and so infernally sharp. He might be a shrewd man of business, bent on making a fortune, and a good way on the road to his object; and yet he's nothing but a man of pleasure, of what your *good* people would call a wretched low kind of pleasure too, and is spending the fortune instead."

"I don't think so, Stewart," his wife said, quietly and impressively. "I don't think Mr. Deane is spending any very considerable portion of his fortune, whatever it may be."

Stewart had resumed his walking up and down, but listened to her attentively.

"I regard him as a curious combination of the man of business with the man of pleasure. I don't know that we have ever met exactly the kind of person before. He is as calculating in his pleasures as other men are in their business."

"I hate the man," said Routh, with an angry frown and a sullen gesture.

"That's dangerous, Stewart," said Harriet. "You should not allow yourself either to hate or to like any one in whom you are speculating. If you do the one, it will make you incautious; if you do the other, scrupulous. Both are unwise. I do not hate Mr. Deane."

"Fortunately for him, Harry. I think a man would be a great deal safer with my hatred than with yours."

"Possibly," she said, simply, and the slightest smile just parted her crimson lips, and showed a momentary gleam of her white, small, even teeth. "But I do not hate him. I think about him, though; because it is necessary that I should, and I fancy I have found out what he really is."

"Have you, by Jove?" interrupted Routh. "Then you've done a clever thing, Harriet—clever even for you; for of all the close and impenetrable men I ever met, Deane's the closest and the hardest. When I'm with him, I always feel as if he were trying to *do* me somehow, and as if he would succeed too, though that's not easy. He's as mean as a Scotch shopkeeper, as covetous as a Jew, as wide awake as a Yankee. There's a coolness and a constant air of avowed suspicion about him that drives me mad."

"And yet you ought to have been done with temper and with squeamishness long ago," said Harriet, in a tone of quiet conviction. "How often have you told me, Stewart, that to us, in our way of life, every man must be a puppet, prized in proportion to the readiness with which he dances to our pulling? What should *we* care? I am rendered anxious and uneasy by what you say."

She kept silence for a few moments, and then asked him, in a changed tone,

"How does your account with him stand?"

"My account!—ah, there's the rub! He's so uncommonly sharp, that there's little to be done with him. The fellow's a blackguard—more of a blackguard than I am, I'll swear, and as much of a swindler, at least, in his

capacity for swindling. Only I dare say he has never had occasion to reduce it to practice. And yet there's a hardly veiled insolence in his manner to me, at times, for which I'd like to blow his brains out. He tells me, as plainly as if he said it in words, that he pays me a commission on his pleasures, such as are of my procuring, but that he knows to a penny what he intends to pay, and is not to be drawn into paying a penny more."

Harriet sat thoughtful, and the faintest flush just flickered on her cheek. "Who are his associates, when he is not with you?"

"He keeps that as close as he keeps everything else," replied Routh; "but I have no doubt he makes them come cheap, if indeed he does not get a profit out of them."

"You are taking my view of him, Stewart," said Harriet; then she added, "He has some motive for acting with such caution, no doubt; but a flaw may be found in his armour, when we think fit to look for it. In the mean time, tell me what has set you thinking of him?"

"Dallas's affair, Harriet. I am sorry the poor fellow lost his money to *him*. Hang it, I'm such a bad fellow myself, so utterly gone a 'coon" (his wife winced, and her pale face turned paler), "that it comes ill from me to say so, and I wouldn't, except to you. But I am devilish sorry Deane got the chance of cleaning Dallas out. I like the boy; he's a stupid fool, but not half bad, and he didn't deserve such an ill turn of fortune."

"Well," said Harriet, "take comfort in remembering that you helped him."

She spoke very coldly, and evidently was a stranger to the feelings which actuated Routh.

"You don't care about it, that's clear," he remarked.

He was standing still now, leaning against the mantelpiece. She rose and approached him.

"No, Stewart," she said, in her calm sweet voice, which rose a little as she went on, "I do not. I care for nothing on earth (and I never look beyond this earth) but *you*. I have no interest, no solicitude, for any other creature. I cannot feel any, and it is well. Nothing but this would do in my case."

She stood and looked at him with her deep blue eyes, with her hands folded before her, and with a sober seriousness in her face confirmatory of the words she had spoken. He looked at her until she turned away, and a keen observer might have seen in his face the very slightest expression of impatience.

"Shall we go into those accounts now?" said Harriet; "we shall just have time for it, before you go to Flinders'."

She sat down, as she spoke, before a well-appointed writing-table, and, drawing a japan box towards her, opened it, and took out a number of papers. Routh took a seat beside her, and they were soon deep in calculations which would have had little interest or meaning for a third person, had there been one present. By degrees, Routh's face darkened, and many



times he uttered angry oaths; but though Harriet watched him narrowly, and felt in every nerve the annoyance under which he was labouring, she preserved her calm manner, and went steadily on with her task: condensing the contents of several papers into brief memoranda, carefully tearing up the originals, and placing the little heaps methodically beside her for consignment to the fire. At length Routh again stood up, and lounged against the mantelpiece.

"All these *must* be paid, then, Harry?" he asked, as he lighted a cigar, and began to smoke sullenly.

"Yes," she answered, cheerfully. "You know, dear, it has always been our rule, as it has hitherto constituted our safety, to stand well with our tradespeople, and pay *them*, at least, punctually. We have never been so much behind-hand; and as you are about to take a bolder flight than usual, it is doubly necessary that we should be untrammelled. Fancy Flinders getting snubbed by the landlady, or your being arrested for your tailor's bills, at the time when the new Company is coming out!"

"Hang it! the bills all seem to be mine," growled Routh. "Where are yours? Haven't you got any?"

It would have been difficult to induce an unseen witness to believe how utterly unscrupulous, remorseless, conscienceless a woman Harriet Routh had become, if he had seen the smile with which she answered her husband's half-admiring, half-querulous question.

"You know, dear, I don't need much. I have not to keep up appearances as you have. You are in the celebrated category of those who cannot afford to be anything but well dressed. It's no matter for me, but it's a matter of business for you."

"Ah! I might have known you'd have some self-denying, sensible reason ready; but the puzzle to me is, that you always *are* well dressed. By Jove, you're the neatest woman I know, and the prettiest!"

The smile upon her face brightened, but she only shook her head, and went on:

"If Dallas does not get the money, or at least some of it, what do you propose to do? I don't know."

"Do you think he will get the money, Harry? He told *you* all about it. What are the odds?"

"I cannot even guess. All depends on his mother. If she is courageous, and fond of him, she will get it for him, even supposing her immediate control as small as he believes it to be. If she is not courageous, her being fond of him will do very little good, and women are mostly cowards," said Harriet, composedly.

"I never calculated much on the chance," said Routh, "and indeed it would be foolish to take the money if he got it—in that way, at least; for though I am sorry Deane profited by the young fellow, that's because I hate Deane. It's all right, for my purpose, that Dallas should be indebted as largely as may be to me. He's useful in more ways than one; his connexion

with the press serves our turn, Harry, doesn't it? Especially when you work it so well, and give him such judicious hints, such precious confidences."

(Even such praise as this, the woman's perverted nature craved and prized.) "You won't need to take the money from him in formal payment," she said, "if that's what you want to avoid. If he returns with that sum in his pocket, he will not be long before he——"

A knock at the door interrupted her, and George Dallas entered the room.

He looked weary and dispirited, and, before the customary greetings had been exchanged, Routh and Harriet saw that failure had been the result of experiment. Harriet's eyes sought her husband's face, and read in it the extent of his discomfiture; and the furtive glance she turned on Dallas was full of resentment. But it found no expression in her voice, as she asked him common-place questions about his journey, and busied herself in setting a chair for him by the fire, putting his hat aside, and begging him to take off his overcoat. He complied. As he threw the coat on a chair, he said, with a very moderately successful attempt at pleasantry:

"I have come back richer than I went, Mrs. Routh, by that elegant garment, and no more."

"Bowled out, eh?" asked Routh, taking the cigar from his mouth, and laying it on the mantelpiece.

"Stumped, sir," replied Dallas.

Harriet said nothing.

"That's bad, Dallas."

"Very bad, my dear fellow, but very true. Look here," the young man continued, with earnestness, "I don't know what to do. I don't, upon my soul? I saw my mother——"

"Yes?" said Harriet, going up to his side.

"Well?"

"I saw her, and—and she is unable to help me; she is, indeed, Mrs. Routh," for a bitter smile was on Harriet's face, turned full upon him. "She hasn't the means. I never understood her position until last night, but I understood it then. She is——" he stopped. All his better nature forbade his speaking of his mother's position to these people. Her influence, the gentler, better influence, was over him still. However transitory it might prove, it had not passed yet. Harriet Routh knew as well as he did what the impulse was that arrested his speech.

"You will tell me all about it yet," she thought, and not a sign of impatience appeared in her face.

"I—I need not bore you with details," he went on. "She could not give me the money. She made me understand that. But she promised to get it for me, in some way or other, if the thing is within the reach of possibility, before a month expires. I know she will do it, but I must give her time, if it's to be forthcoming, and you must give me time."

"It's unfortunate, Dallas," Routh began, in a cold voice, "and, of course, it's all very

well your talking to me about giving you time, but how am I to get it? It's no good going over the old story, you know it as well as I do. There, there," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "I must try and get old Shadrach to renew. I suppose we may as well go at once, Dallas." He left the room, followed by Harriet.

George Dallas sat over the fire in an attitude of deep dejection. He was sick at heart, and the revulsion of feeling that had begun at Poyngers had not yet ceased. "If I could but be done with it all!" he thought. "But I'm in the groove, I'm in the groove."

"Come along, George," said Routh, who seemed more good humoured than before, as he re-entered the room, soberly attired, as became a man going to do business in the City. "Don't be down-hearted; the old lady will keep her word. Don't be afraid; and, in the mean time, we'll pull through. Put your coat on, and come along. You'll give us some dinner, Harriet, won't you? And if Deane calls, ask him to join us. He won't," he continued, with a laugh, "because he believes in tavern dinners, and puts no faith in ours. We're snobs who live in lodgings, George, you know; but he'll drop in in the evening fast enough."

The application to Mr. Shadrach proved successful, and George Dallas returned with Stewart Routh to his lodgings, more firmly tied to him than ever, by the strong bond of an increased money-obligation.

"Pretty tidy terms, weren't they?" Routh asked Dallas, when he had told Harriet, in answer to her anxious questioning, that the "renewal" had been arranged.

"Very tidy indeed," said poor George, ruefully; "but, Routh, suppose when I do get the money, it's not enough. What's to be done then?"

"Never mind about *then*," said Routh, "*now* is the important matter. Remember that every *then* is made of *nows*, and keep your mind easy. That's philosophy," as Mr. Squeers says. "Your present business is to eat your dinner."

Stewart Routh had thrown off his low spirits, and had all but succeeded in rousing George Dallas from his. Kindly, convivial, only occasionally coarse, he was a dangerously pleasant man at all times, and especially so to George Dallas when Harriet was present; for then his coarseness was entirely laid aside, and her tact, humour, intelligence never failed to please, to animate, and to amuse him. The dinner was a very pleasant one, and, before it had come to a conclusion, George Dallas began to yield as completely as ever to the influence of the man whose enviable knowledge of "life" had been the first medium through which he had attained it. George had forgotten the renewed bill and his late failure for a while, when the mention of Deane's name recalled it to his memory.

"Has Deane been here, Harry?" asked Routh.

"No, Stewart, I have been at home all day, but he has not called."

"Ah—didn't happen to want me, no doubt."

"Have you seen much of him lately, Routh?" inquired George Dallas. "I mean, within the last week or two? While I—while I've been keeping out of the way?" he said, with a nervous laugh.

"Poor boy, you *have* been down on your luck," said Routh. "Seen much of Deane? Oh yes; he's always about—he's here most days, some time in the forenoon."

"In the forenoon, is he? Considering the hours he keeps at night, that surprises me."

"It doesn't surprise *me*. He's very strong—has a splendid constitution, confound him, and has not given it a shake yet. Drink doesn't seem to 'trouble' him in the least."

"He's an odd fellow," said George, thoughtfully. "How coolly he won my money, and what a greenhorn I was, to be sure! I wonder if he would have lost his own so coolly."

"Not a doubt of it," said Routh; "he'd have been satisfied he would make it up out of something else. He *is* an odd fellow, and a deuced unpleasant fellow, to *my* mind."

Harriet looked at her husband with a glance of caution. It was unlike Routh to dwell on a mere personal feeling, or to let so much of his mind be known unnecessarily. He caught the glance and understood it, but it only angered, without otherwise influencing him.

"A low-lived loafer, if ever there was one," he went on, "but useful in his way, Dallas. Every man has a weakness; *his* is to think himself a first-rate billiard player, while he is only a fourth-rate. A man under such a delusion is sure to lose his money to any one who plays better than he does, and I may as well be that man, don't you see?"

"I see perfectly," said George; "but I wish he had been equally mistaken in his notions of his card-playing science; it would have made a serious difference to me."

"Never mind, old fellow," answered Routh; "you shall have your revenge some day. Finish your wine, and Harriet shall give us some music."

She did so. She gave them some music, such as very few can give—music which combines perfection of art with true natural feeling. This woman was a strange anomaly, full of "treasons, stratagems, and spoils," and yet with music in her soul.

Rather early, George Dallas left the pair, but they sat up late, talking earnestly. Things were going ill with Stewart Routh. Some of his choicest and most promising combinations had failed. He had once or twice experienced a not uncommon misfortune in the lot of such men as he;—he had encountered men in his own profession who were as clever as himself, and who, favoured by circumstances and opportunity, had employed their talents at his expense. The swindler had been swindled once or twice, the biter had been bitten, and his temper had not been improved in the process. He

was about, as Harriet had said, to take a new flight, this time, in the direction of operations on the general public, and he had formed designs on Mr. Deane, which did not, in the increased knowledge he had obtained of that gentleman's character, and in the present aspect of affairs, look quite so promising as in the early stage of their acquaintance, six weeks before. The operations of gentlemen of the Routh fraternity are planned and executed with a celerity which seems extraordinary to pursuers of the more legitimate branches of industry. Routh had not passed many hours in Mr. Deane's society (they had met at a low place of amusement, the honours of which Routh was doing to a young Oxonian, full of cash and devoid of brains, whom he had in hand just then), before he had built an elaborate scheme upon the slender foundation of that gentleman's boasted wealth and assumed greenness. His subsequent experience had convinced him of the reality of the first, but had shown him his mistake as to the last, and gradually his mind, usually cool and undaunted, became haunted by an ever-burning desire to possess himself of the money for ever flaunted before his eyes—became haunted, too, by an unreasonable and blind animosity to the stranger, who combined profligacy with calculation, unscrupulous vice with well regulated economy, and the unbridled indulgence of his passions with complete coldness of heart and coolness of temper. Routh had no knowledge of Deane's real position in life, but he had a conviction that had it been, like his own, that of a professional swindler, he would have been a dangerous rival, quite capable of reducing his own occupation and his own profits very considerably. Therefore Routh hated him.

When the conference between Routh and Harriet came to a conclusion, it left the woman visibly troubled. When Routh had been for some time asleep, she still sat by the table, on which her elbows rested, her head on her hands, and the light shining on her fair brown hair. There she sat, until the fire died out, and the late wintry dawn came. She was not unused to such watches; wakefulness was habitual to her, and care had often kept her company. But no vigil had ever tried her so much. Her mind was at work, and suffering. When at length she rose from her chair with an impatient shiver, dark circles were round her blue eyes, and her pure waxen complexion looked thick and yellow. She lighted a candle, turned the gas out, and went for a moment to the window. The cold grey light was beginning to steal through the shutter, which she opened wide, and then looked out. She set the candle down, and leaned idly against the window. Weariness and restlessness were upon her. The street was quite empty, and the houses opposite looked inexpressibly gloomy. "One would think all the people in them were dead instead of asleep," she said, half aloud, as she pulled the blind down with a jerk, and turned away. She went

slowly up-stairs to her bedroom, and as she went, she murmured:

"Where will it end? How will it end? It is an awful risk!"

### SCHOOL-DAYS AT SAXONHURST.

#### V. BREAKING-UP DAY AT SAXONHURST.

THE old custom of "notching off" the days—which dates from Robinson Crusoe, whose vacation, poor dear! was so long in coming—or strictly, of erasing a day every morning, out of an almanack, with a very heavy pen, obtained nowhere to such a degree as at Saxonhurst. Every one had some such little record, and thus quickened the laggard steps of time. There was a peculiar fascination about the closing days. The exquisite idea of "GOING HOME," threw a halo over everything. The festival called "PACKING-UP DAY"—the penultimate day—had a raciness of its own. Great stores were all thrown open; contraband goods seized at the customs on passing the frontier and detained during the pleasure of the authorities, were all honourably restored. So, too, were suits of elegant attire, ball and evening suits (brought for no earthly purpose save to minister to the pride of the owners), ornaments and decorations, books which had not passed the censorship, even pipes and cases of cigars—all were given back in the handsomest manner. Each found his property laid out on his bed neatly, and his trunk beside it. Some of these treasures we could not bring ourselves to pack up, but were displayed, with pardonable pride, on our persons. A greater ceremony came on towards four o'clock, when there was a grand Te Deum sung in the church, accompanied by all the resources of OUR BAND and orchestra—drums, trumpets, hautboys, sackbuts, and all kinds of music, piping and thundering away with prodigious effect. The whole House assisted; and thus the official year was supposed to end. But next day was the true day of glory—our BREAKING-UP DAY—the day when the fathers, uncles, brothers, and guardians, came from distances to see their young relatives covered with glory; when the neighbouring squires drove up the long avenue; and when, in the great room, there was an "Exhibition" and distribution of premiums.

An enormous room, at one end of which was a large amphitheatre that mounted in rows of seats to the ceiling, was crowded with a tumultuous audience, while the lower seats, cushioned, held the illustrious strangers and the neighbouring squires. Sometimes, a lord and a baronet came. Down in the middle were two converging rows of chairs facing each other, the seats of torture for the "young gentlemen" who were to entertain the company by reciting various pieces. The remembrance of this honourable suffering—for it was only youths who had distinguished themselves who were selected—makes me even now feel elevatedly uncomfortable. And in the centre, close to the Head of the House, was a round table with a

green baize cloth, on which mystery, hope, joy, terror, and agitation were, so to speak, encamped. For here were the prizes laid out: a gorgeous and dazzling show, and in the centre, the cynosure of our College Museum, a gorgeous inlaid casket, said to have been the private property of Queen Maria Christina, and out of whose countless little drawers and pigeon-holes fluttered innumerable deep blue ribbons, at the end whereof were the large silver medals, struggled for during many weary months; but whose destiny was not yet known. The rest of the table was gaudy with crimson and gold volumes, quarto, octavo, duodecimo—a mass of richness; besides these glories, there were odd volumes of the classics, in quaker-like dress, whose appearance was not so comfortable.

Most delightful of school-days! I think of myself sitting in the sunlight, in a half dream, enraptured with the excitement of that morning. We were all more or less magnificent in our new clothes (one of the most fascinating moments had been the operation of being measured, and of selecting from the tailors' patterns, in which we were allowed uncontrolled latitude), and most of us—that is, of us the big boys—with glistening new hats, in which we took a just pride, and which we would have worn in the House, if we could. Some of our costumes were fanciful, owing to the absence of supervision. I recollect a companion who had to "spout" the Death of Cæcæus, in a pea-green shooting-coat with bronze buttons, on which were sportsmen loading guns in alto-relievo. He had also a Scotch plaid waistcoat, of the red and white pattern, and pale slate-coloured trousers. Yet this bold and striking costume excited the deepest admiration among us, and the sporting buttons were later surrounded with eager admirers. Some of us wore dress-coats and white waistcoats, as if we were going to enter upon life as waiters; and there were one or two who were not going home, who wore the established uniform of the place—the blue tails and gilt buttons—and whose adversity—this matter of dress seemed the hardest portion of it—was commiserated in a manly and feeling silence.

I have a bundle of old programmes of these happy festivals before me now. There was a grandeur and solemnity in the announcements that seemed to me the height of majesty. As soon as the illustrious company had entered in procession, and taken their seats, our orchestra began, with, say, the overture to Zampa, led in right concert style by our conductor. Then one of the young gentlemen advanced into the middle and delivered "a prologue," which was applauded, as everything was. Then came Horace, brought by a victim to an amiable and courteous gentleman stranger, who was as nervous as his examinee, who shrank from raising his voice, and who said, "Would you be kind enough to turn to the first ode?" which the other did with surprising alacrity. But things did not always go so smoothly. For

sometimes the youth fell into the hands of a quick and truthful professor from some other college, who tackled the victim at the known pitfalls and ditches.

After this, would come a solemn dirge in the Latin tongue. The Destruction of Jerusalem would be applauded as vehemently as if it were thoroughly understood. Then came a Greek author and more construing, and then the band again. Then came more examining, and finally the Ode, which was the wind up. When that was done, our indefatigable music struck into the Valse d'Amitié, and then came a sudden quiet and devouring restlessness. For now the prize list was to be read out. What a flutter! And as each name was given out, and the happy youth came down from the amphitheatre to have the deep blue ribbon put about his neck, what rounds of terrific applause burst forth! The delight of those moments cannot be described; the triumph and sweet satisfaction of being invested with those decorations I have never experienced since. The rest of the day was a restless dream. When the guests, who were feasted on exquisite viands in the banqueting-hall, came out, we were formed by our drilled sergeant (in full uniform) into battalions, and went through our manoeuvres with the precision of the real thing. Then we walked about with our new hats on, as though we, too, were gentlemen just visiting the place.

#### VI. CHRISTMAS-DAY AT SAXONHURST.

At Saxonhurst it was wisely ordained that no one should go home at Christmas. No distinction was made for peer or peasant. Our community being made up of all nationalities—of Brazilian even, to say nothing of Frenchmen, invariably known as "Frog" this and "Froggy" that—it was felt that the scattering and bringing together of such cosmopolitan elements would consume the whole year.

But which of us would have gone home? Which of us would have given up the galaxy of joys which our Chiefs had artfully accumulated for that special season, in compensation, as it were? The revelry that went on was truly Old English; above all, it was then that the THEATRE ROYAL, SAXONHURST, threw open its doors, and gave a short season of eight or ten nights.

Our stage was a wonderful structure, a miracle of strength and ingenuity, put together with bolts and screws. It had cost some hundreds of pounds, had trap-doors, flies overhead, and every modern appliance in abundance, and the boast of the carpenters who annually fitted it together was, that they had not to drive a single nail in it. "Behind the scenes" was a great jungle of huge posts and joists; it seemed to us a grand work. Indeed, its arrangements were very perfect, having a large set of rollers to which any amount of scenes could be attached, with ropes and levers for winding up. The front was handsome—a cheerful crimson ground, on which were heathen temples, and tragic and comic muses in



abundance, and tritons and garlands, and a great shield in the centre, on which were inscribed the names of Shakespeare, Sheridan, Colman, and Morton, in gold letters—a selection which seems to me a little arbitrary, and scarcely to represent the British Drama. But we had a marvellous wardrobe, and we had a perfect armoury of guns, swords, and pistols. The most delightful of offices was considered that of “green-room deputy.” There were two such officers, who worked under the direction of one of the masters. The mechanical duties which this situation opened up—the lighting of fires, the hammering, tinkering, furbishing, with, it must be added, the avoidance of lessons, made it eagerly sought. The harder and dirtier the work, the more welcome it was. But Christmas had other attractions besides the Drama. The most ennobling part was THE BOXES.

One snowy night, a few days before Christmas Day, I was in the great court, and through the open door saw a huge whitened country waggon and a whitened waggoner. They had made a long journey from the railway station, and carried the first instalment of “the boxes.” Every right-minded parent sent a substantial token of his or her—most usually her—affection, in the shape of a good-sized deal box, heavy, substantial, and taking two strong men to move it. As the great festival drew on, minute directions were written home, couched in strains of painful anxiety; and after the customary “I hope you are quite well, I am very well,” the letter invariably burst into Fortnum and Mason details. “Please let the meat pie be very large. Jack Hodder is being sent one too. I hope Lizzy is quite well also. Please not to forget the *drum of figs*. Also the sovereign in the middle of the plum-cake—*far in*, or, *Mr. Wilkins will take it*.”\*

The public post carried innumerable letters of this pattern, and the great waggon of the snowy night had brought some forty of these chests. From “the customs”—as I may call the great schoolroom, where the great chests were brought in and examined—came telegrams from Mr. Wilkins and his brother officers. Had Gibbs’s box arrived? Gibbs wanted to know. Had Smith’s? Smith had asked in agony. The prevailing terror was always—nor was it unreasonable—that by some casualty the precious chest might go astray, or be detained on the road until the festival was over, and then be recovered with all its contents in a mouldy condition.

Some of us used between whiles to get peeps into this precious storehouse, the savour of which, compounded of all delicious edible odours, seemed to us the most exquisite of perfumes. The extraordinary variety of these articles! There were enormous pies, veal, ham, game,

running over with rich jelly. Every box contained a frosted plum-cake—parents’ ideas might differ as to the size of this delicacy—but a plum-cake of some sort and size was *de rigueur*. Every one had his drum of figs; the very name had a kind of musical and satisfactory sound, and it was known that by some mysterious law application could be made again and again to the “drum,” under circumstances of repletion, without inconvenience or satiety. Boxes of raisins, delicious French confitures, almonds (oranges were a local specialité, and could be always purchased in the House), cream, tarts, and Heaven knows what. Roast ducks and fowls were not encouraged, but they came nevertheless. Do you remember, dear Tom—for your name helps me with these reminiscences—that huge pie, like a pie out of a pantomime—which arrived with other enormous delicacies, was it from Yorkshire? And which seemed to hold all the birds of the air, according to their kind, their individuality all but lost in the strongest jelly ever made?

On the great festival-day itself, the season might be said to commence; on that morning dropped in, generally, some half-dozen “old fellows,” who had travelled long distances to come. All that day there would be meetings in the long galleries, half-doubtful recognitions, with a joyful “Halloo, Jack—this you! How are you?” The stress on the “are” being laid by abundant hand-shaking. The presence of these fellows, in their gay mundane dresses, who were going about enjoying everything, added to the general pleasure.

In the evening of the day the festival began, as just mentioned, with the CHRISTMAS CONCERT. This was the time when OUR BAND would go in and “take their innings,” and cover themselves with glory on the stage of our Theatre. The whole crowd of the rest of us poured up in uproarious spirits, and filled pit and galleries in a moment. According to immemorial custom, the first part was selected from the Messiah—especially its Christmas portions; and even unmusical creatures, who would have held the great Handel himself very cheap as compared with a good game of football, always felt the sweetness and appropriateness of “There were shepherds in the field keeping watch,” &c., which led on to the grand chorus, “For unto us a child is born.” Our choir, very strong in the cathedral treble of boys, would cover itself with glory in this effort. A sweet and round boy’s voice gave out the traditional song of the night—never omitted—an old Christmas carol, which ran to this effect:

Listen to the carol’d ditty,  
Listen to the village chime,  
Dear to friendship, joy, and pity,  
Comes the merry Christmas time.  
The merry, merry time,  
The merry, merry time,  
Comes the merry Christmas time.

The music of this, ineffably sweet when swelling into the chorus where the whole House

\* The Reverend Mr. Wilkins was the officer who “passed” the boxes at the customs, and it need hardly be said that his only object in intercepting the supplies of money was to ensure its not being squandered inconsiderately.

joined, rises on my ears at this moment and dies off in the distance with the "Merry, merry time," still lingering. We had some French, and Brazilian, and Italian, and Spanish of quality and condition, who lived in a sumptuous way, among the Epicureans, and who did what they liked, and I remarked that these foreign gentlemen would invariably distinguish themselves on some instrument, which they played with great ease and grace, and with infinite modesty. I always envied the graceful bows with which these elegant aliens received the applause they worthily earned. Our English performers took their stand on the cornet or flute, and I myself had the honour of inviting mankind to the waltz, on the latter instrument. Upon these occasions, we "soloists" made it a point to appear in true professional costume, white tie and white waistcoat, and full blaze of evening dress. Then there were madrigals, overture to Masaniello by our band, selections from the opera by our choir. The Duke of Kent's Quick Step, when would *that* cease to be popular? A trio for violoncello and piano, a comic vocal trio about some "crows in a corn-field," sure, from its mimetic character, to bring the house down, and the "Valse d'Amitié," ever fair and young.

#### VII. THEATRE ROYAL, SAXONHURST.

But next night—first of the theatrical season—was a greater festival. Never was there an audience so eager to be pleased and delighted with everything, even with the brilliant vermilion front and crimson curtain, all blazing under the cheerful glare of the footlights. When all are seated and orderly, we begin with a prologue, generally local, and touching on local topics, in a facetious strain; and then the curtain rose on the piece of the night. In the "season" were always produced, a good comedy, a good tragedy, a couple of farces, a melodrama, and a light comedietta. This was a fair allowance for a week or eight days. Some of us had no mean powers. Traditions were among us of two or three "old fellows," grand tragedians, reputed (with much wise manner and shaking of heads) to equal, if not exceed, the late Messrs. Kean and Kemble. These gentlemen were before my day. But I can recall the handsome Charles Gurney, who played Shylock. We had a series of brothers, too, who, as they "came up," were conspicuous for passionate declamation and "jeune premier" style. It was sapiently agreed again and again among us that these youths had but to show themselves on the stage, and they would in a few weeks realise a handsome independence. Richard, Duke of Glo'ster, also exhibited the handsome Gurney with tremendous effect, sneering sardonic and raging, maintaining a splendid combat, and dying excessively game. When he was called before the curtain, the house rose en masse, and remained yelling and shrieking for many minutes—the highest dramatic compliment we could pay. The late Mr. Justice Talfourd's Ion was perhaps the most splendid

of all our successes. A lavish outlay was incurred. Entirely new scenery, dresses, and decorations. The "Interior of the Greek Temple" a set scene, and prodigiously fine. Young Rice, by his pathetic rendering of the hero, *it was said*, drew tears from aged eyes. The effect, too, was enhanced by mournful music and dismal marches of Greeks. But it was remarkable that no plays had a success like Shakespeare's, where there was good broad sterling declamation and fair sentiment—the longer they were, the better too.

In comedy we had yet greater strength. We were great in Speed the Plough; we were great in Guy Mannering, with the gipsies, and the Dominic, and its charming music—"The winds whistle cold"—"O slumber, my darling," and the rest. This was always "got up" in a highly spectacular way—tableaux and costumes of the most effective sort. I recall the unbounded laughter at Dandie Dinmont and the rollicking fellow that performed him, and the capital dance: when all the Scotch peasants came stealing in right and left, with sheepish hang-dog manner (precisely as on the stage), as if they were passing by accident, but in reality to take part in the reel. A hautboy and a clarinet, the latter sustaining the drone, made an admirable imitation of the bagpipe, while a mimetic instrument bearing that appearance was exhibited in front; for we never distinguished Highland music from Lowland music. When the villagers drew off gradually, and left Dandie dancing in the middle by himself, and who then, still dancing, proceeded to throw off waistcoat after waistcoat, now red, now blue, to the number of some twenty. With every waistcoat came a roar of delight; the whole, waistcoats included, was encored rapturously.

The writer hereof was himself held in very fair esteem and popularity as a low comedian. Indeed, during his day, the leading "funny" parts came to him as a matter of course. Solomon Gundy, the English barber who had paid a visit to Dunkirk, was considered a great creation, perhaps the greatest of all his successes. The Comedy of Errors, in which the same comedian played Dromio, and a half foreign gentleman the companion Dromio, was considered a great hit. We were capable of surprising "cramming"—some of us could learn a part in a day. Shakespearean battles, "which begin by a flourish of trumpets" outside, were always immensely enjoyed and fiercely contested. Between the parts, much exhausted by carrying our heavy pasteboard armour and wooden shields, we hurried into the green-room, where there was a huge jug of restoring punch and soothing lemonade.

There was one year when the writer had attained to the dignity of an Epicurean, which was considered a very famous theatrical and musical year. Our body included the most diversified talents, and gentlemen of all countries. We were all tall and accomplished (or were fully satisfied on those heads), and paid

great attention to our dress. But among us were some revolutionary elements, and the fomentor of all was a certain half Mexican, Manuel Nuñez. He was a sort of "red," but a very pusillanimous "red," who, though wearing a great beard and moustache, had been known, when his intrigues were exposed, to go down on his knees, and roar and cry not to be sent home to Mexico. I recollect this crafty emissary working on the younger Epicureans, artfully stirring them up and inflaming their fancied wrongs. It was he and some others who skilfully worked the agitation against the French professor: a most accomplished gentleman and admirable scholar, who superintended our studies. He worked on our national prejudices. Some of us, especially Linton, claimed to be "men of the world," and were sarcastic, though politely so, of course. Linton was about two-and-twenty, had spent years in Paris, was good-looking, and had a perfect wardrobe of fashionably-cut coats, which he wore with corresponding grace. It was noticed that when strangers came, Linton could speak to them with natural easiness of equality, yet without familiarity. We felt oppressed by a sense of awe and reverence, as if in the presence of superior beings. By a mere elevation of the eyebrows and an amused smile, perfectly respectful all the time, Linton could embarrass our French professor to an amazing degree. That gentleman spoke our tongue wonderfully, for a Frenchman, but in presence of Linton—at dinner, say—who seemed to listen with a respectfully amused air until he should finish—he always faltered. Laboriously anxious that he might apprehend his meaning, Linton would, with many excuses, lay the blame of misunderstanding on himself, and beg that he would repeat it. The open laughter all round at these studiously polite passages—we were sadly boorish—would make our poor professor colour and be confused. At last, one day, he lost all patience and temper, and told Linton that he was ungenerous, unmanly, and shabby; that he saw and understood perfectly what he was doing; and that he thought it mean, and did not envy his (Linton's) feelings. We delighted in repeating a passage in this expostulation, which was said to have taken the shape of "onjenny Russe, onmanlee, and shebbee!" And even at dinner, before the master's face, we would tell each other that we were "shebbee." But our hero and man of the world, Linton, had him on the hip. He at once took on himself to call a meeting in the billiard-room on a matter affecting our interest. He addressed us there. We had all seen "the uncalled-for attack" that had been made on him, and what he must call the remarkable temper with which he had received it. He was going to lay the matter before a higher tribunal. That concerned himself; but there was another view affecting us. How long was this to go on? If we allowed ourselves to be treated *any way*, why, well and good. But in the world it was usually observed that people encroached, the more licence they

got. It was purely for us to consider this general aspect of the question.

Linton went himself to wait on the Head of the House, stated his case with great deference and politeness, and gave what he called a plain and unvarnished history of the matter. The Head of the House, a little taken aback, said he would send for the French professor. We could see by the silent and injured looks of our professor at dinner that the matter had been given against him. Linton, with his wonderful air of the world, addressed him with cordiality several times, and even tried to encourage him by bringing on—generously, as we thought—the subject of French politics. But it would not do. "You see," Linton afterwards said, with a wave of his hand, "what the man is! Perhaps it is more his country than himself that is to blame." We were indignant at this behaviour, worked on by the Mexican. Besides, it was given out that our professor was addicted to various "mean French ways" (there was not a particle of truth in this), and that he listened with his ear to keyholes, and spied after every one. Indeed, the Mexican went so far as to say he had "caught him at the end of the gallery on his knees, with his eye to Johnson's door, just before evening." There was a circumstantial particularity about this charge that lifted it above suspicion. The man of the world had prepared a paper, a document. He had thrown together a few ideas. It was "an address" to the head of the House, couched in the most elegant and respectful terms known to the English language, praying for the removal of the professor. It was drawn up in heads, "I, II," &c., and I distinctly remember the wording of one paragraph: "And the gentlemen Epicureans would respectfully suggest the unsuitability of a foreigner whose natural ignorance of English tastes and habits unfit him," &c. There were other complaints as to diet, &c., drawn up with almost legal nicety and roundness, in which, too, a sarcastic allusion was made to "the bringing up of English gentlemen who were accustomed to the ordinary delicacies of the table." The document was written out on a large deed-shaped piece of paper (formed by gumming several sheets of foolscap together), and was beautifully engrossed by the most accomplished penman of our society. At another meeting, called in the billiard-room, it was duly signed. But there were recusants. Our man of the world came out wonderfully on this head, saying, "By all means let Jackson stand alone, if he wished. He (Linton) *wished* this to be a free act; in that lay all its moral force. There were others who had scruples too; but we had all wished to be in the *same boat, like gentlemen*. I make it a point now that this shall make no difference in our dealings with Jackson." (How noble!) Jackson could not hold out any longer, and signed. A deputation was "told off" to present the memorial, of which I was one. The Head of the House, it was known, would only receive complaints through the proper officer—his deputy and our professor. With a boldness that bordered on

effrontery, I offered to wait on the professor, to ask him would he come down and meet the deputation in the billiard-room? He was writing when I entered—perhaps home to French friends, poor man! and I recal his worried stare. "Certainment not," he answered, bitterly. "I shall *not* wait on dem. Let them comb here if they have anything to say toe me." I withdrew rather abashed, and reported my reception. "Certainly," said Linton, with an easy smile. "Let us gratify him in all reasonable matters." And taking up the roll, tied neatly, he led the way to the professor's room. The poor Frenchman, still writing, looked round, scared, I think, as the "deputation" advanced: most members of the deputation rather avoiding good front places. But Linton stood forward calmly, and made a short speech. We had ventured to embody, he said, a few of our complaints in this document, and he hoped we might ask him to take the trouble to lay it before the proper authority. (How fine it was to have this command of words!) With a profound, almost sweet, bow, the roll was placed in the professor's hand (in which he was described as "a foreigner"), and we withdrew.

These demands created a storm in the House. For a time we heard there was a question as to whether we should withdraw our signatures or retire from the college. But afterwards I learned that it had caused intense amusement, and many a hearty laugh.

The plays given by the "Gentlemen Epicureans" were always on the last nights of the season, and were looked forward to eagerly. The acting was better, we being of more advanced age; and the expenditure more lavish, we having plenty of money. Looking through our playbills, I find that the plays selected were mostly of a special class—where there was a fine field for brigands, and robbers, and crowds. This was owing to the foreign element in our constituency, who were necessarily driven into pantomime. Delightful to me, and very far back too, seems *THE MILLER AND HIS MEN*, where there were plenty of "men" (foreigners) who carried white sacks, and where there was a good deal of firing, the smoke of which covered many faults, and where there was a white mill, which went round, and was blown up at the end. A year or two later came *THE CASTLE OF ANDALUSIA*, which exhausted our richest Spanish dresses, and had its firing too, and brigands, and a cave also; the brave Frenchmen came out splendidly here, singing Dr. Arne's music excellently, and such of them as were mere mute brigands making natural comedy and melodrama out of their walk and eyes. Nor must I pass by the inimitable little Italian, who, with an imperfect knowledge of our tongue, learned the whole of the facetious Pedrillo's part in a style that quite shamed us natives; for, besides being "letter-perfect," he threw such infinite gusto and grimace into the comic man-servant as to receive all the honours of the night. A Master I Have was redemanded twice, with rapture.

Our own particular Epicurean year was to be

marked with signal success. The play we selected was *THE IRON CHEST* (we had a tremendous Sir Edward Mortimer), in which was Storace's good music, and again, plenty of robbers. No one there had seen or heard of Box and Cox; and we determined to bring that popular farce out. Linton, the man of the world, was Cox; the writer, still a low comedian of reputation, was Box. It was a success, long after remembered and talked of—perhaps because of the practicable fireplace, admirably contrived, on which the famous chop and bit of bacon were cooked. The names of both plays were kept dark, and there was much public speculation as to what had been selected. I recal a fresh, crisp, frosty night, the night before our performance, when a daring band of us descended by a ladder from our window, into the broad open playground; all the doors had been locked and made fast, so there was no other way of accomplishing our dark deed. There were two or three of us, and though the process we chose was inconvenient, we revelled in it. We had a pot of paste and some large posters—struck off at a neighbouring town—and these we affixed to every blank wall, "ball alley," and convenient coigne of vantage. Early next morning, when the mob came rushing out—as it always did, for no apparent reason—to its accustomed sports, you may be sure we were all at our windows to see the effect. There were crowds gathered about the posters, reading with amazement and delight the following astounding bill of fare:

#### THEATRE ROYAL, SAXONHURST.

GREAT ATTRACTION!

*For One Night only!!*

This Evening will be performed the Romantic  
Drama of

#### THE IRON CHEST.

Characters by Messrs. Smith, Jones, Robinson,  
Dumoulin, Nuñez, Sebastiano, and Toussaint.

To conclude with

#### BOX AND COX.

Box . . . . . Mr. FitzCarter.  
Cox . . . . . Mr. Linton.

#### AN ARTIFICIAL OCEAN.

As the steamer from Folkestone to Boulogne nears the chalky outline of the French coast, the traveller cannot well fail to notice a strange craggy sharp-pointed looking affair, brown in hue, and unlike anything he is familiar with—except an iceberg, as represented in a travelling panorama, supposing the ice to have been touched over with red ochre. Appealing to the captain, or the through railway guard, the said traveller will be informed "it is the new aquarium adjoining the Etablissement des Bains de Mer."

The exterior of this monster aquarium is by no means pleasing to the eye, neither did it at all impress the visitor who pens these notes, on being entered. We gazed into sundry pits; some had water in them; from others the tide had



gone out, and the few living things which were there at the ebb, like "Barkis," had gone out with it. A few flabby shore-crabs, some winkles and pectens gasping for air and water, a sea-urchin or two, their jackets of lime and membrane so dry that their spines and suckers were fixtures like themselves, several dead and dying fish—these made up the sum total of the treasures from the deep. It seemed a chaos of pits, holes, and indescribable openings. There were legions of tile pipes which appeared to have no definite direction, leading to every place and from every place, crossing and re-crossing until the eye failed to take in anything but an inexplicable confusion of holes and lines of rope. It suggested the idea of its being the work of beavers and musk rats, if one could have imagined them equal to making draining-pipes and heaping up tons of concrete. In this state of baffled hope a Frenchman beckoned the visitor to follow him, and shook his head at all he had been contemplating. We crossed several deep pits on narrow planks, threaded our way past a pile of limey-looking rocks, down over a slanting kind of place where water was dropping from a stream above, that tumbled into a chasm and disappeared, and, after winding along a damp intricate labyrinth-like passage, we came suddenly into an immense cavern. The cavern is, at a rough guess, about sixty feet long and not quite so wide. The centre is supported on massive pillars made to resemble stalactites, while through the arched and gloomy roof light steals in mysteriously.

Real as the cave looks, still much more strongly is the idea of being really under the sea brought home to one when along the sides and fronting the entrance are veritably, and not metaphorically, a number of small seas; cavern-like openings are skilfully made in the sides of the vault, the fronts of which are of glass, let into the irregularities of the concrete; the interiors of these holes are of all shapes, and are hollowed into quaint dens and lurking-places for sea-fish to skulk and hide in; only a few of them as yet are completed, but in those that are filled with sea-water the light is so artfully and cleverly admitted, that one can see no end to the space. It is like gazing into an illimitable extent of water—a sea, looked up through, instead of down into.

The artist by whom this clever production has been originated, is M. Edouard Bénédict, and under his clever and artistic management it is rapidly growing towards completion. Report whispers that this same artist is to be commissioned to erect another monster aquarium for the coming Paris Exhibition. There is not a question as to this aquarium being, at present, the largest in the world; and it is not too much to say in praise of our neighbours on the other side of the Channel, that they will confer a benefit on the world, if the managers of these little oceans exemplify the art of pisciculture, which, as an art bearing directly on the question of supplying food at a cheap rate for the poor, stands second to none.

What fish do in the deep sea, we none of us know; how they spawn, when they spawn, where they spawn, or what becomes of the baby fishes when they launch from the egg into the world, are, with a few exceptions, mysteries to us. Here, however, a chance offers itself of playing the spy upon the habits of deep-sea fish. Why should they not spawn in these tanks? Oysters, too, may spat, for aught we can tell, in such an aquarium.

All honour to the artist and to the good people of Boulogne for setting us a good example. It is very beautiful, even in its unfinished condition; but when lichens, mosses, ferns, and plants that love the damp and shade, shall clothe with their fronds of green and gold the concrete overspreading the hollow bricks of which the substructure is composed, and when seaweeds (as they are misnamed) shall wave to and fro in the miniature seas on every side, it will be a most striking and an unparalleled combination of nature and art.

### A GOOD HACK.

THE young man from the country, who for the first time penetrates from the whirl of Piccadilly to the shady silence of May-fair, will notice at the corner of a street a signboard in a more elaborate style of art than is common on modern public-houses—a sprightly youth, in the costume of the "pampered menial" of the time of George the Second, with a pole in his hand, stepping away at the rate of some six miles an hour.

The sign represents an ornamental luxury that died with the last famous or infamous Duke of Queensberry—the running footman—a class of servant without some half-dozen of which, early in the eighteenth century, no great house was complete. They ran before and alongside the fat Flemish mares of the period and warned the innkeeper of the coming guests, or with their long staves helped the caravan-like coach out of the numerous sloughs on the northern or western high road.

Good roads and post-horses increased the coaching-pace from six miles to ten miles, and killed the trade of running footmen: leaving nothing but the costume and the long staff turned into a cane for the gorgeous creatures who still hang behind court chariots or lord mayors' coaches, and do ornamental duty in the vestibules of great houses.

With the decline of the running footman, and from the same cause—the improvement of high-ways and public carriages—began the decay of the famous British hackney, or roadster.

We may be sure that the roads were very bad, and that travelling on wheels was very expensive, when Alexander Pope rode to Oxford through Windsor Forest, on a horse borrowed from the Earl of Burlington, and met on his way the bookseller, Bernhard Lintot, also riding a nag borrowed of his publisher, "which he had of Mr. Oldnixon for a debt."

These roadside hacks had qualities not found in these days of Macadam and railroads, because not wanted. They were for the most part between fourteen and fifteen hands high. A tall horse is neither handy to mount nor likely to last through a long day. They were strong, for they had to carry, over and above the horseman with his large cloak and jack-boots, a heavy saddle with holsters, pistols, and saddle-bags. They were tolerably swift, for the rider might have to owe his safety to his pace. They had good shoulders and plenty before the pommel, capital legs and feet; they were hardy enough in constitution to bear rough weather, indifferent stables, and coarse fodder. They were required to carry their riders, not for an hour or two now and then, for exercise or fashion's sake, but for long days, day after day, and that with an easy elastic walk, trot, or canter. According to a rule as old as time, the demand created the supply, and men of fortune were always willing to buy at long prices a handsome, sure-footed, easy-going, enduring hackney, while less fortunate travellers put up with every degree of utility with more or less of comfort and beauty, because they had no other way of journeying.

After half a century of stage-coaches had tempted most travellers on to wheels, came railroads and destroyed the roadside inns, where the horseman used to find a warm welcome after a long hard day. On the great north road, where twenty years ago the crack of the postillion's whip and the blast of the guard's horn, the rattling of hoofs and the jingling of pole-chains, resounded night and day, you cannot now make sure of a bed, a decent meal, or a feed of corn. As for ostlers, the race is extinct; if you choose to ride or drive, you must bring your groom, or groom your horse yourself.

This decay of inns renders impossible feats performed by men of our own time, though of the last generation. Old Dick Tattersall used to have a relay of hacks on the road between London and Grantham; used to mount, after a day's work of auction at the extinct Corner, ride down one hundred and eight miles before morning, hunt the next day with the Belvoir hounds, and return by the same means to his duties. Sir Tatton Sykes, of Sledmere, the last of the real squires, who was satisfied to spend a large income at home on hospitality, field sports, agriculture, and breeding Leinster sheep and horses to win the Derby, without troubling either the world of politics or the world of fashion, had a way of travelling (with as little baggage as Sir Charles Napier) to Epsom to see the Derby run, or to an equal distance to ride a race, that would now be impossible. Wherever he slept the first night, he borrowed next morning a clean shirt from the landlord, and left his own to be washed ready for his return. He repeated the operation at each resting-place on the road, returning by instalments each borrowed garment until he arrived back at Sledmere in his own shirt.

A small valise carried the satin breeches and silk stockings that replaced his leathers and long boots in the evening. The operation was ingenious, primitive, and clean; but in 1866 the landlords with frilled shirts have followed the way of satin breeches, and are known no more.

Enduring hacks of the old sort are now only to be found in the hands of active farmers, who look over hundreds of acres before breakfast, and in the hands of country surgeons. They are generally satisfied with anything useful that will do their day's work—very different from the time when a good roadster hackney was worth as much as, and was more carefully chosen than, the modern brougham horse.

In Australia you may find horses of English breed that will travel their three hundred miles in five days, and therein lies their principal merit; for well-broken easy-going roadsters are rare in that rapid, make-haste-to-be-rich country. The Australian horse is an instrument of business, not an instrument of pleasure.

Very different was England some thirty years ago, when the tour on horseback was to be enjoyed in perfection by the horseman whose years, health, and spirits, could defy the damp days, muddy roads, dark nights, and uncertain inns, for the sake of independence, adventure, and the abstract pleasure there is in riding a good horse. "The gentleman was known by his horse." He was not tied by a mile or two, or an hour or two, and, well mounted, was not afraid of getting a little wrong in trying a short cut, or investigating a promising scene, a green range of hills or ancient manor, buried in a park of ancestral oaks. Country folk were wonderfully kind and cheery to such a traveller; stout farmers returning from market were hospitably pressing (in the northern counties); and squires, once assured the stranger was only travelling for pleasure—not unfrequently the adventure of Squire Western on his road to London was repeated, a chance run with hounds and a dinner with a stranger to follow—were wonderfully kind. All through the counties where, at war prices, moorland had been enclosed, there were long slips of greensward on either side of the highway, inviting a canter in the morning, and affording pleasant walking ground for the last tired mile or two. Then there were many delightful short cuts through bridle-roads across fords too deep for wheels, and — by sufferance of lodge-keepers, open to the blandishments of a smile, a pleasant word, and a shilling — through parks rich in turf, water, woodland, game, and deer. Oh, those were delightful days, when, young and full of life and hope and romance, with a good horse, a sufficiently well-filled purse, and more than one friend on the round, we set out, not afraid of rheumatism, to travel some two or three hundred miles with a definite point to reach, but no particular day or hour or route! In those days—it was before these grisly whiskers of ours had made their appearance, in spite of industrious shaving—the

roadside inns, now desolate, or turned into granaries, boarding-schools, lunatic asylums, had been brought to perfection (for bachelors) by constant traffic. If you were not able to hit a great hotel, there were small public-houses patronised by graziers, with "accommodation for man and beast" sufficient. There were adventures, too—not highwaymen, they had gone out with the preceding generation—pleasant acquaintances were made, and unsuspected charms in the way of sport and scenery were discovered. But there were also, it must be admitted, drawbacks which few men over thirty would willingly encounter without some real object. Long rides at a footpace on dark dirty nights, on a tired lame horse; inns full of drovers and butchers attending a fair; no stable-room; your saddle, or perhaps your horse, borrowed in the morning; and an attack of ague, fever, or rheumatism, as the reward of your enterprise and preference for a horse-ride to seats in the Tally-ho or Tattivy.

Boswell, writing just a hundred years ago to his friend Temple, of a journey to and from Glasgow, says: "I shall chaise it all the way—thanks to the man who first invented the comfortable method of journeying! Had it not been for that, I dare say both you and I would have circumscribed our travels within a very few miles. For my own part, I think to dress myself in a great-coat and boots, and get astride a horse's back, and be jolted through mire, perhaps through wind and rain, is a punishment too severe for all the offences I can charge myself with."

For these reasons it would be a waste of space to say more about the gentleman's roadster, an animal as extinct as a four-horse coachman. The cover hack is the nearest representative of the roadster hack of our grandfathers; but the spread of macadamising principles, the consequent inclination to use wheels, and the extension of railroads, have had their effect on the numbers of that once indispensable part of a hunting-stud. At one of the crack meets in the Pasture counties at the present day, you do not see one-tenth of the number of genuine cover hacks that came rattling from all points of the compass thirty years ago, when Sir Charles Knightley and Sir Tatton Sykes were the first-flight men of their respective counties. Deduct those who come in one of the many varieties of cart, phaeton, wagonette, drag, and brougham—those who make a hunter do hack's work at all near meets—those who use a nondescript general-utility animal, as familiar with a collar as a saddle—those who make their London luxury, the Park hack, do duty in the country (as one of the oldest and most famous masters of the Quorn often did), and the residuum of real cover hacks will be found very small.

A perfect cover hack should be able to walk nearly five miles (towards home), trot at least twelve miles, and gallop twenty miles, within the hour, with ease to himself and comfort to his rider. But there are famous hacks that only canter and

gallop, and one of the best and handsomest we ever knew could walk five miles and trot seventeen miles an hour (like oil); but galloped like a camel, rolling and labouring every yard. She was bred between a Welsh pony and a thoroughbred horse.

Pace is essential, because those who ride cover hacks are sure to be late and in a hurry; but easy elastic action, only to be found in well-shaped well-bred animals, is equally essential, because you desire to arrive as fresh as possible after your bustle to cover-side, and above all to enjoy the change from a tired hunter to a fresh hack, and *glide*, as it were, towards home.

A perfect cover hack can jump pretty well, especially stiff timber, creep through cramped places, and lead over impossible places, and then he is quite equal to a dog with harriers or to carry your eldest hope to foxhounds.

The luxury of the age in horsemanship is the Park hack, ridden daily for pleasure only, capable, if perfect, of doing a long day's journey well; but that is not essential, as he is seldom required to go more than five or six hours at a moderate pace. The true Park hack must be handsome in a picturesque point of view, which is quite different from the handsomeness of a hunter—as different as the ideal form of Mars and Apollo—easy in every motion and pace, full of courage, yet with the sweetest temper, silky, elastic, graceful. Mares are admitted among perfect hacks, and are often more beautiful, though less to be depended on, than geldings. The latter are, all other things being equal, preferred.

The statesman, the great lawyer, the surgeon of European reputation, the capitalist on whose signature miles of railroads and acres of docks all over the world are constructed—the journalist, whose brains are to him both capital and power—all the hard workers whose means permit and tastes allow—all the army of pleasure-seekers who work hard at amusement—all the gatherers and distributors of wealth may find in a perfect Park hack a luxury, a rest, a healthy excitement, a pleasant fatigue, a medium for grave or serious converse, for light lively gossip, for making love, for making friends, for patching up quarrels, for selling bargains, or arranging political combinations, which the old-fashioned squire, the provincial manufacturer, and the turf man who never rides, and who looks on horses as mere machines for betting on, cannot understand, and therefore despise. A fine form and elegant manners are indispensable in the Park hack. A hunter may have a plain head and a rat tail, may be a stumbling slug on the road, or a hard puller in the field, but if he fence brilliantly, and can gallop, and live through a first-class run in a first-class country, he will command a long price, because all minor faults are forgiven in consideration of his perfection in his trade.

The following sketch of the Park hack is from the pen of one of the most fashionable dealers and finest horsemen of Piccadilly:—The Park hack should have, with perfection of graceful

form, graceful action, an exquisite mouth, and perfect manners. He must be intelligent; and amongst horses, senseless brutes are legion, for without intelligence, even with fine form and action, he never can be pleasant to ride. Thorough-bred is to be preferred; and if not quite, as nearly thorough-bred as possible, of any colour except mealy or foul marked. White marks often much improve, sometimes quite disfigure a horse. The height may be usually taken at from fourteen hands to fifteen hands two inches; but tall horsemen and women look best on tall horses. That most thorough-bred hack, Fire King, purchased for the Emperor of the French, at the Agricultural Hall, in May last, was full fifteen hands three inches.

The head should be of the finest Arab type. The neck well arched but not too long. The shoulders, light at the points, long, and grown well into the back. The loins should be accurately arched and the quarters level and nicely rounded, not drooping toward the tail (like many capital hunters, famous race-horses, and useful road hacks). The mane and tail should be full, straight, without the least suspicion of a curl, and every hair as soft as silk, four clean well-shaped, well-placed legs, the fetlocks rather longer than would be chosen for a hunter, and from such a form action may be confidently expected, pleasant to the rider, and a pleasure for even the commonest observer to follow.

The walk of a Park hack should be perfection—fast, springy; the legs moving apparently independently of the body without apparent exertion, with all certainty of machinery, the head carried in its right place, the neck bent and the tail displaying a full flag gracefully keeping time with the footfalls. From the walk he should be able to bound into any pace, in perfectly balanced action, that the rider may require.

Those who remember the warrior Marquis of Anglesea on his Pearl, will be able to realise this sketch. But a survey of Rotten-row in the season will always present some pictures of life and motion, fire, courage, and docility to which no painter could do perfect justice.

Perfection can only be obtained by fortunate and wealthy purchasers who know how to choose, or who allow those who do know to choose for them. Such horses have been sold at four hundred and even five hundred guineas. The ordinary price of a Park hack may range from eighty guineas to two hundred pounds.

Although more beautiful riding-horses may be seen in Hyde Park than in any other city in the world, there are also more discreditable brutes to be seen there than elsewhere. Besides screws of all kinds, the well-worn cidevants of riding-schools, immortalised by John Leech, and the many useful animals whose owners neither deserve nor desire observation, there are all the eccentricities of a city of three millions of inhabitants. Everything odd in colour, in shape, and in training; huge men on ponies bending under their weight; little men on giraffes. The perfect horseman on the perfect hack, is jostled by

the lout with no qualification but the pluck of ignorance, on a star-gazing wretch that has only received the rudiments of a polite education.

"There should," observes the correspondent already quoted, "be as much etiquette in riding in Rotten Row as in the ball-room of a palace. That, however, is a part of national education in which there is much room for improvement."

But the Londoners are not the only comic or dangerous riders. Sometimes, country gentlemen bring their stale snaffle-bridle hunters, lumbering along terribly out of place; others indulge themselves in riding cross-made animals of their own breeding, with no other merit. The latest and most remarkable exhibition of wild horsemanship was not performed by an ambitious clerk, or an amateur dealer intent on showing off a half-broken colt, but by a young gentleman of fashion, the descendant of a long line of hunting men, famous in a famous hunting county. The fact is, as one of the greatest masters of hounds and finest horseman lately remarked, "In the field a hard fellow who can stick on, and does not care for falls, will often hold a place in the first flight; but for the Park the horse should be perfectly broken, and the rider should understand those principles of horsemanship which, in these fast days, are too much neglected in England. The well-broken Park horse walks, trots and canters, and changes his leg in cantering on slight but certain indications of hand and leg. Too many hold their reins like a bunch of tapes, and only use their legs to spur."

As to ladies' horses, a perfect Park hack is a lady's horse, with the exception that a man does not look amiss subduing a fiery animal, and by degrees bringing him down to obedience. To use a horsey term, a good horseman may enter the Park with a fine-tempered horse, "a little above himself"—not vicious. The rider with fine hands endangers no one, if his fresh high-couraged horse have a fine mouth; while the dullest brute with a leather mouth may be at times most dangerous. Above all things, in choosing a Park hack avoid a nervous animal, which, like an armed coward, is one of the most uncertain of creatures, and, when mad with fright, loses even the instinct of self-preservation. For the same reason, a horse that shies from timidity or defective eyesight (many horses shy from high spirit when not sufficiently exercised) is as much to be avoided as a stumbler. In country riding, a horse has room to shy. On the other hand, it is magnificent to see how sometimes a high-couraged horse will positively enjoy and display himself at the sound of shouts, hurrahs, musketry, or military music. In the Life of Sir Fowell Buxton, it is mentioned that his favourite horse, John Bull, stood, in a grand attitude, when surrounded by a mob who were hooting and hissing the Prince Regent, excited but motionless, like a fine statue. The Prince was so much delighted with the horse's be-



haviour, that he sent to purchase him, but "John Bull was not to be sold."

A word about the weight-carrying cobs, which in perfection are as scarce as any class it is possible to name. Plenty of cart-bred brutes, with thick hairy legs, heavy shoulders, and round quarters, are to be found in the Park, bestridden by stout gentlemen, whose ignorance, it may be presumed, gives them courage; plenty, too, that go safely in very vulgar form, whose chief merit is their docile stupidity. But the ideal cob to carry a millionaire, is a stout body, short strong flat legs, with fine sloping shoulders and a thorough-bred head and neck. This cob must walk admirably with reins on his neck, nodding his head, and must pace from Hyde Park to the Bank if needed without slipping, sliding, or paying the slightest attention to the most unexpected sights or sounds. A very light mouth is, perhaps, not essential, as your welter-weight generally hangs more or less on the bridle. He must trot or canter well—trot for choice—smoothly, and if fast, all the better; but a Park cob need not be fast, if true in his paces. If, then, up to seventeen stone or upwards, of a good colour (a lady may ride a piebald or a cream, but a banker cannot), with suitable manners, he is worth from one hundred to three hundred guineas, according to merit and the pocket of the customer.

A young hack, however good, is easily spoiled by a careless rider, just as ladies' horses are often spoiled for want of regular exercise. Half the accidents that take place occur from this cause. Good stud-grooms do not consult my lady, but give Sultan or Fatima, full of blood and full of corn, a full hour's exercise in the morning early before the side-saddle is called for.

"So you have got the young Kingston horse back again?"

"Why, you see, sir, the gentleman that gave me three hundred for him took him down into the country, and rode him about all the summer with one hand and a snaffle bridle, so I have to break him over again!"

Park riders, a last word. Don't forget your hands!

### MOLLY THE TRAMP.

VERY late on a dark wet night in June, two persons entered together a pawnbroker's shop in Dublin. One was a low-sized countryman, with a fox-like face, quick eyes, hanging brows, an unscrupulous mouth, a narrow forehead, and a large ear set so amongst his bristling hair, that it had the appearance of being habitually cocked. He was clad in two huge coats of grey frieze, and wore a consciousness of responsibility. He looked hard at the other customer entering with him, who shrank away and covered into a corner by the counter. The pawnbroker, coming from a little room behind the shop, directed his attention to

the countryman at once, with only a glance at the timid figure in the background.

The man in frieze was a west-country drover, who had arrived from the mountains only a few hours before with a drove of sheep for market. He found himself unexpectedly in need of money until next day, when his stock would be sold. He pulled off the outer of his two coats, and flung it on the counter.

The pawnbroker examined the coat, and a discussion arose as to the amount of money to be advanced upon it. It was thrown from one to the other, shaken out, folded up, and finally tossed down on the counter, while the pawnbroker, himself in a passion, almost dragged his bullying customer into his little room behind, for the purpose of showing him articles of equal value, for which he had advanced smaller sums than that which he now offered on the coat. The other customer, a woman, was left standing in the shop alone.

She was a woful specimen of womanhood: a figure whose outlines were lost in miserable wrappings of rags, a dirty trailing gown, and a tattered shawl. Her bonnet, fit for a gutter, had two or three griny red roses flaunting dismally under the brim. Her skin was dark, either by nature or from want of care and cleanliness. She was quite young, though one could hardly know it, looking on her thin fallow face, deadened eyes, and colourless lips.

She had in her hand what can only be described as a rag. A wobegone look had fallen over her face when the two men left her unnoticed: a look which was crossed now and then by one of impatience, which burned up and went out of her fallow face again, leaving the stolid weariness to come back. Of what use was it for her to be angry who only existed in the world upon sufferance?

Presently the pawnbroker comes bustling back to the shop to fetch something, takes in her wretchedness with a keen eye, and roughly asks her business. She offers him her rag, calling it a mantle. It is perfectly worthless, and he is out of temper. He flings it back to her with an oath, and returns to his more important customer.

The tall figure shakes as if blows had come down upon it, the light of eagerness fades out of the eyes, the hands mechanically fold up the rejected garment. This is no new scene that she is passing through: no unexpected trial that has come upon her; it is part of the daily routine of her life. Harsh words, repulsion, are as familiar to her as the taste of bread and milk to a child who has never suffered hunger. She accepts the award of her patience with the meekness of habitual dejection, but behind it there is something stirring which is not habitual; something which makes the cowed spirit rise up again, which awakens persistence out of the passiveness of despair. She turns again from the shop door, towards which she had set her face, and takes her stand by the counter once more. She will wait to have another word with the pawnbroker.

Now, the root of this girl's purpose was holy, and yet her next act was the drop of evil that overflowed the cup of her misery, and turned trouble into sin.

She was so weary, that the earth seemed to drag her failing limbs towards it. Her eyes were fixed on the opposite wall, looking at a filmy picture present to them—a dying man, struggling with his death, alone in darkness. She heard not the shouts and curses in the street outside, nor the bargaining of the two men in the inner room, but a voice calling "Drink! drink!" She heard the horrible, greedy cry, "Whisky!" gurgling in a dying throat. Her sunken eyes started forward, her hands wrought with one another. She gazed all around the shop. No one near her, no one minding her; and the coat still lying on the counter.

For one moment she was raised to the dignity of resisting temptation. Only one moment; need was too great, habit too strong, misery too deep. The coat was snatched, and the girl vanished.

The two men returned only about a minute too late, and rushed into the street crying "Stop thief!" The cry was echoed and tossed from lip to lip in the dirty lanes and alleys. Drunken men reeled out of taverns and caught it, wretched children yelled it along the gutter. It clamoured in the hunted creature's ears as she strained her weak limbs along the pavement, or huddled herself into some corner to let the pursuers go by. "It is the last time, the last time!" she muttered. So it was, the last sin of many; but not to go unpunished.

The cry had long ceased, and the chase had been abandoned, when the dark figure crept in at a miserable doorway, and up a dirty, crazy flight of stairs. She had no coat in her hands now, but some money, and a small bottle. She looked from right to left with scared eyes, and then entered a squalid room where the dawn was stealing wanly through a broken skylight in the roof. The walls were perfectly bare; there was no sign of food, furniture, nor clothing. The girl looked eagerly towards a corner where the figure of a man lay stretched upon straw. She went forward, listening and gazing intently, and dropped on her knees beside the figure.

"Here it is," she said, in a voice of fright that matched her face; "here is the whisky. I could not get it any sooner."

There was no answer by sound or movement.

"Father!" she shrieked, with a wild sob. She lifted an awful-looking hand from the straw, and dropped it again. The figure on the pallet was a corpse. The cries that had rung through the room when she left it were still for ever.

She drew a covering over the body, looked round the bare walls of the den, and sat down on the floor with a passive despair in her white face. Her foot touched the bottle of spirits. She snatched it up and half emptied it at a draught, stretched herself on the straw at the feet of the corpse, and soon fell into a state of unconsciousness that answered with her for peace.

This is the history of Molly's crime. It is quite useless for the purposes of this story to go back any further into her past. It is not easy to get at the true antecedents of such creatures. One, would have told you that Molly Cashel was a charwoman; another, that she was a ballad-singer; another, that she was a street-vagrant; another, that she was a thief. Each account would have been true, for she had been all of these things in turns. She had been dragged through every kind of misery from her wretched motherless childhood until now, her nineteenth year. She had been ill-treated and made a slave of by a brutal step-father—the man whose last desire she had sinned to strive to satisfy. A worn-out, battered creature, who had never had any youth, who had never been taught, who had been driven on all her life by the instincts and necessities of the present moment.

It was only six o'clock, but the June sun was shining hotly down into the filthy alleys, glistening on the mud made by the rain of the night before, and burning on the broken window-panes crusted with dirt and stuffed with rags; and the Rooneys were up already, and fighting as usual. The Rooneys were a family of wandering mountebanks, who lodged at present in the room under that in which Molly Cashel and her father's corpse were lying. This den was a singular contrast to the one above it—not that there was a whit more comfort to be seen within it; but whereas the one was bare, and full of the silence of death, the other was overflowing with all kinds of litter, and echoing with the quarrelsome shouting of noisy voices. The remains of a coarse breakfast lay about a dirty bench at one side of the room, and heaps of frippery rags mingled with tinsel gewgaws were scattered about in all directions on the floor. The Rooney mother, a stout broad-faced vixenish-looking woman, was engaged in pasting daubs of gold paper all over a very dirty white muslin short frock—part of the costume usually worn by Miss Matilda Rooney when dancing the sailor's hornpipe. The Rooney father, who, when he was not in a passion, had a general air of humorous rowdiness, was adorned by nature with a squint, and by accident with a broken nose, which last was fiery in colour. He was now occupying himself (with one arm in one sleeve of a ragged coat) by knocking the ashes out of his pipe and his knuckles on the heads of his two sons, who were unwillingly practising somersaults in one corner, and responding to the paternal correction by loud growls of remonstrance. Miss Matilda Rooney, a dwarf of sixteen years who looked about ten, was busied in twisting battered artificial flowers together, for the adornment of her own elf-locks of rusty red and the enhancement of the beauty of the paternal squint, which she inherited in full perfection. As she worked, she beguiled her task by stray words of impudence flung at her father and mother, and frowns

and shakings of her fist at a squalling baby who was lying kicking on his back, neglected, on the floor.

The Rooney family was about to divide itself and go upon two separate pedestrian excursions into different parts of the country, to startle simple villagers and inhabitants of roadside cottages with the display of its wonderful accomplishments. The Rooney sons were going to tumble southwards in their tights and spangles; the Rooney father, mother, daughter, and baby, were going to dance, scrape, and jingle their way westward with pipe, fiddle, and tambourine.

The Rooney family was making so much noise with its preparations, that a timid knock was repeated thrice outside, and no one in the room heard it. At last the door was driven open, and a white face was pushed in.

"Molly!" cried the Rooney mother, and there was a general hush—so scaring, for the moment, was the wild white face at the door.

"Arrah, thin, it's you that looks fresh and rosy after yer mornin' walk!" cried the Rooney father, with a laugh at his own wit.

"Father's dead!" said Molly, her dark hopeless eyes wandering away from the people in the room up the blank walls in a vacant search for sympathy.

"Dead!" came from all in a chorus, and then from one:

"Rest his soul!"

From another:

"He'll give ye no more black eyes!"

And again:

"Ye'll be breakin' yer heart afther him!"

"He's made a lucky flittin'!" said Tim Rooney, the father. "He'd ha' been thrown out for rint to-morrow. Have ye any money?"

"I have money," said Molly, unclosing her hand and showing silver.

"Where did ye get it?" cried Mother Rooney, eyeing it greedily. "Ah, ye jail-bird! Ye've been thievin' again, have ye? Ye'll be goin' abroad some o' these days, my darlin'. Why don't ye take afther poor honest folks like uz, and get yer livin' decent, ye divil ye!"

"I want to do it," cried Molly, imploringly, "but they won't let me. None of them will let me. The days keep coming, one after another, and force me into badness. Oh, if you would take me out of the town with you, Mrs. Rooney, I'll give you this money, and I'll thramp the country like the best! Couldn't I carry the baby for ye, Mrs. Rooney?" cried Molly, wringing her hands.

Mother Rooney told her to get out of that for a slut, and sent her away to bury her father; but before daylight next morning the Rooney family had decided that Molly would be an acquisition to the tramping expedition. The neglected baby that kicked on the floor had grown since the last excursion, and Mother Rooney had found difficulty even then in managing both it and her fiddle. Molly could sing ballads and carry the baby. So, the

pauper's funeral being over, Molly was bidden to enter on her new profession of tramp.

She locked up the door and surrendered the key to the landlord. The girl's leaden heart was a little less leaden when she had done this. In that room she had starved, sinned, mourned, and despaired. She fetched the neglected baby out of the Rooney Bedlam below, and sat with it in a high corner landing of the rickety staircase. It would be hard to analyse the chaos of poor Molly's brain. Doubtless there was a heavy retrospection going on behind those black eyes wide open in the darkness, listening to a "death-watch" ticking at her ear; for Molly in her wanderings had got stray glimpses of religion—just enough to let her know that her life was all wrong, and that there was a better life to be attained somewhere, but never by her. There was expectation, too, in those wide-open eyes; but it was very vague and dull. That a change, no matter what, was at hand, was Molly's chief idea. She would get away out of the filthy streets and lanes, to which she was not dainty enough to object because of their filthiness, but because within their boundaries every man's hand was against her. To what manner of region she was going, she did not know nor care. She had never been out of the town in her life, and the open country was a sealed book to her. Probably she should get enough to eat, of some kind; she should not have to steal—perhaps not even to beg, where there would be so many more nimble-tongued to do it. Hard usage and fatigue she was inured to; any change must be for the better. She got a crust of bread from the Rooneys that night, and leave to stretch herself behind their door till morning.

By dawn they were off on the tramp, Molly carrying the baby, her pocket stuffed with dirty ballads; Mother Rooney with her fiddle; Father Rooney with his pipes and some baggage; Matilda with her tambourine, and her dancing-dress covered with a shawl, the point of which dragged in the mud and dabbled on the young lady's heels as she went along. The drizzling rain kept on, and for the first two or three days, things were wretched. The country was sheeted in mist, and cottagers kept their doors shut. The towns they passed through were uninteresting and inhospitable. A magnificent show on wheels and a German band were travelling the same route, arriving in every place of note just in time to occupy all the public attention and leave hardly a stray gape of curiosity for the miserable Rooneys. So they left the route they had intended to follow, and struck out on the bog and mountain country.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Through the drizzling summer day and far into the drizzling summer night, four weary dreary figures plodding on, and never the sign of a dwelling in sight since the last unfriendly village had been left miles behind. Hitherto they had always found a lodging in the shelter of some town, but to-night there was nothing for it but to creep into

the shadow of an old ruined chapel and make their beds among the stones and grass.

All were soon fast asleep; but at midnight the last of the rain fell, the mists mustered in long troops, and filed away over the hills. The moon rose, marching grandly up a sky such as city chimneys never see; mountains that had been curtained out with rain-clouds lifted their gloomy heads against the horizon, or bowed their brawny shoulders down to the plains to catch the silver benediction of the hour. Streams struggling here and there through hollows, with their swollen burden of waters, flung up glances of delight to the sky, as they had now light to go on their stumbling way. A plover in his nest felt the silver touch upon his wing, stirred among the rushes, gave a cry of welcome, and was at rest again.

The cry awakened Molly, who was sleeping with her head against the opening of a broken arch, and her face to the moonlight. She had been dreaming of a tavern row, of police, of a jail, of hunger, brawling, curses, and jury. She opened her eyes to the white purity of the moon, her ears to the dreamy echo of the plover's note, and her soul to its first knowledge of peace. She laid the sleeping child out of her arms upon a corner of his mother's gown, covered him with her own old rag of a mantle, stole out from the shadow of the walls, and stood dazzled and bewildered in the mellow glory of the night. The land on which she looked, was as new to her as if she had been led to the spot blindfold. What strange place was this where heaven bent towards her like a mother, where the very air seemed full of kindness, and the earth looked soothed, as if cruelty and wickedness had been charmed away from it for evermore? She had seen the moon many a time, looking with a ghastly glance of disgust on dismal scenes to which she, Molly, had belonged. She had never been gazed at, all alone, by a tender eye like this. A strain of sublime enthusiasm was wrung from her ignorant soul. A wild regret for being what she was, sprang out of the passiveness of her degradation. She put her poor face between her hands and fell to weeping.

She sat down on a stone by the roadside, and with her head upon her arms dropped asleep. The sun was high when a sound of whooping and shouting—drover's cries—roused her. A troop of kyloes were shoving along the road towards her, a man mounted on a horse bringing up the rear. Molly's instinct to hide from every face as an enemy's, rose up within her, and carried her back trembling to the ruin. But she peeped out from the shelter of the old window, and saw a pleasant picture framed there; a long winding sunny road, sunny mountains, the wild little troop of rugged cattle tossing their horned heads and plunging along, and the figure on horseback behind. As the figure came nearer, Molly drew back into her hiding-place, with a start of dismay. The man was the owner of that stolen frieze coat. "Whoop, whoop!" shouted the drover's rough voice, and "click, click!" went his smacking whip,

but Molly heard nothing but "Thief! thief!" The flock went past, and Molly, shaking with terror, gathered the baby in her arms, and buried her face in its chubby shoulder. Had they tracked her out to this beautiful land, to drag her back to the town and fling her into a jail? They had passed her by, but would they not come back and find her?

Tramp! tramp! again; but to-day over a burning road, with a dazzling sun above their heads. They had a grand performance before a roadside cottage, the pipes and fiddle clamoured which should be loudest. Miss Matilda danced her hornpipe, Molly sang her ballads with a wild ringing fear of the drover in her voice, but a scrupulous perseverance, that told of her determination to earn her living honestly. She had a fine true voice, with a strain of sweetness and pathos in it that startled people, coming from so dingy a figure. The woman of the cottage was touched by it, more than by the dancing and singing of the Rooneys. The baby had sobbed an accompaniment to Molly's song, and the baby got some new goat's milk and bread. And for the singer's sake the rest of the hungry band had a meal of new potatoes.

"Yer come from the town?" said the motherly woman, who had taken the baby in her arms whilst Molly ate. "Ay! the town's a bad place. There's a poor drover body gone past a bit ago, only's been four days away, an' has come home without his fine coat that he counted to do him the rest o' his life. Stole from before his eyes by a vagabond thief o' a girl, before he'd been an hour in Dublin."

The blood ran into Molly's face for shame, and out of it again for fear.

"No, but I didn't mean that all the towns-folks is bad!" said the woman, kindly.

By evening they arrived at a wayside inn, where a number of men were drinking. There had been a fair not far off the day before, and some were only now on their way home from it. They were smoking and drinking in a little earthen-floored room, and had just been talking of the luckless drover and his coat, he having passed there about half an hour before. It seemed he was scattering his story behind him; over the country as he went, like the crumbs cast by the boy in the tale.

The Rooneys saw their chance and pushed their way up to the door of the tavern. Molly's black eyes, full of an agonising question, peered in at the door of the close noisy room, and scanned the faces present. The one she dreaded was not there.

The tramps were welcome here with their music and dancing. Father and mother Rooney were king and queen of the hour, and were treated to steaming glasses of punch. Matilda's hornpipe was applauded to the echo. When it came to Molly's turn, she made two or three pitiful attempts to sing, and failed wretchedly. She was over-tired. None of them had such a wearisome burthen to carry as she had had, the heavy baby clinging for ever round her neck. The fear, too, was in her throat yet, and she could not sing.



Father Rooney came over to the corner where she sat, and threatened her with his fist in her face. She broke down, turned her face to the wall, and wept. A young man sitting on a table at some distance had been watching her attentively, and took note of this scene. He was a strong-built, frieze-clad, well-to-do-looking young farmer with a brave brown face, and very kindly and sweet-tempered blue eyes. He was not drinking like the rest, nor making a noise. What he saw in Molly to fix his attention, people might have wondered if any one there had been temperate enough for observation. But wonders are not rare. That he saw she had sorrow in her heart, may not be thought a sufficient reason. Perhaps he divined her youth through the ageing disguises that hung about her. Perhaps he had a mother who prayed for him at home, or a sister whom he petted, and it irked him to see a girl with traces of beauty and feeling in her unwashed face, subject to the threats of one like Tim Rooney, forced to take a prominent place in a gathering like this, and turning with her grief to the wall in her voidness of expectation of sympathy or succour. He saw at all events that she was choking with thirst, and that her lips were baked. He fetched and offered her a glass of lemonade.

"Toss it off, my girl!" said he, "it'll keep the skin from crackin' on them dhry lips o' yours. Ye'll give us a snatch o' a song by-and-by."

Molly seized and drank, woudered, rejoiced, looked at his frieze coat and shuddered; looked at his kind strong face, and worshipped.

"I can sing now. Is there any song you would like to have?" said Molly, tingling with her gratitude.

"Give us the '*Colleen dhas crotheen a mo*' (Pretty girl milking her cow)," said John Haverty.

Molly lifted her voice and sang as she had never sang before. The young farmer looked at her kindling eyes, and felt a curious desire to know what she would look like, were her face washed, and were she dressed in clean garments like a fresh country lass, accustomed to keep company with the larks in the morning.

The song being over, Tim Rooney came up and struck the songstress on the mouth. He had become brutalised by drink, and cursed her for whining an old drimendru instead of one of the racy new-fashioned ballads he had furnished her with. His stray blows fell on the child.

"Not the child! oh, not the child!" cried Molly, with the blood dropping from her lips; for by dint of moaning and crying to the little thing, and being worried by it, she had grown to love it strangely. She wrapped it in her arms and went out of the cabin with it, just in time to escape from the hubbub that was raised, when John Haverty stretched Tim Rooney on the floor.

She sat down on the edge of a well at some distance from the house, and washed the blood from her mouth, and soothed the baby's cries. It was so wonderfully new to Molly to have a

protector, that it wakened in her a happy amazement which dulled the sense of physical pain. She bathed her wound mechanically, but she did not feel it.

Presently Haverty came out to look for her; the only one who missed or thought of her.

"My poor girl!" said he, "yer' badly hurt. But I settled yon ruffian in a way that'll make him think twice, before he lifts his hand to strike a woman again. Here, hould this to yer mouth, asthore, it'll keep the blood away," and he gave her a fine snow-white *nappikeen* (head-kerchief), which he had bought at the fair as a present for his mother.

"Now I tell you what it is, my girl," said he, "you must lave the bad company yer in. Yer not o' their sort, it's plain to see, an' you ought to get quit o' them."

"Not of their sort." Molly exalted above anybody! Above those whose honesty she had emulated! Oh, if the drover were to appear now and denounce her to this friend. She looked fearfully over her shoulder, but there was no cause for fear. Peace and security were all around her.

"I'd be glad to do anything you bid me," said Molly, out of her heart, "for no man ever spoke so kind to me before. But I wouldn't know what to do, nor where to go, an' besides, I'm sure they'd kill the baby among them if I left it with them. It'll not be better o' them blows this good bit. Whisht! whisht! my darlin'!"

"Yer heart's in the right place," said Haverty, admiringly. "Yer ought to look to yersel', though. Ye could do rightly. The country's a good place to make a shift in, not like the town. Can ye sew?"

"No."

"Can ye read?"

"No."

"Well, ye could work in the fields like many a heartsome lass, an' people would be fightin' for lave to give ye a lodgin' for a stave o' one o' them darlin' songs of yours. See here! There'll be a match-makin', to-morrow night, over at Widow Conneely's in the bog. Lave this clan, an' make a start o' 't for yersel' at wanst. I'll be lookin' out for ye, an' I'll put in a good word for ye, I'll tell ye the songs that'll stale their hearts. Ye'll come?"

If he had asked Molly to make an effort to walk across the sea to America she would have promised to try. She gave him her word she would be at the Widow Conneely's. He had been throwing pebbles down the well, emphasising his words by an occasional splash; now he bade her good night, and walked away across the moor, strong and sturdy in the moonlight with his black-thorn stick in his hand. And Molly, with the baby, crept away to the barn where they were to pass the night. There was not much sleep for Molly, however. All the time she lay there, she was thinking and dreaming of the kind compassion of John Haverty, who had at once become the idol of her hungry heart, which had been so starved of love all its life. She thought if he would only give her a corner

of his field to work in, and come and speak to her like that for a minute or two every day, she would reach the very summit of earthly happiness. By daylight she was up again walking about, having left the child wrapped in the straw by its mother's side. She wandered about in the crimson dawn, meeting in her own wild untutored way wonderful revelations of a new life, drinking in with the pure air exhilarating draughts of refreshed vitality which brought rushes of health into her languid veins.

She went down to a lonely river among the hills and bathed. She wrung out her long matted hair; she had not even a comb to comb it with. She washed the blood-stains from the white kerchief Haverty had given her, and folded it across her shoulders. Then she cried more passionately than she had ever cried for pain or hunger, because she could not cast away her dirty ragged gown, having no other. She bethought her of the motherly woman whom they had left two miles behind them on the road, who had taken the tramps into her tidy cottage, and held the baby while Molly ate of her bounty. So curiously had trust in humanity been roused in the girl, that she set off at once, running along the high road to throw herself on the mercy of this person almost unknown, believing that she would help her in her dilemma. The motherly woman was feeding her hens before her door, when Molly appeared to her coming along in the sunrise, with her half-dried hair hanging over her shoulders, her eyes lighted with an eager hope, and her face clear and bright with the new flush of health and vigour that possessed her.

"I don't know but I may be a fool," said the motherly woman, as she sorted through the garments in her household chest; "but I took a likin' to ye at the first when I seen ye so down an' unheartsome among them screechin', jumpin', bould-faced crew. An' I like ye better this mornin'; for ye've got more o' the clane country look about ye, an' a purty face o' yer own ye have. God be with you, then, and take the loand o' this turkey red; your nappikeen 'll cover the misfit o' the body. An' if ye don't turn out honest, it's God 'll settle accounts with you, an' not me."

The "turkey red" was an ample calico gown of that warm hue, and when Molly was arrayed in it, and the white kerchief on her shoulders, the motherly woman was so delighted with her appearance that she insisted on dressing her hair to make her complete.

"I can plat beautiful," said she, "an' I'll plat it up to the crown of yer head, the way I used to do my own little girl's, before the Lord took her from me, Heaven be her bed! But let that stan' till we get the cup o' tea. My good man's from home, an' there's nobody here but our two sels."

Thus treated, Molly's heart overflowed with delight. While breakfast was preparing, she sought for a smooth pool outside, and surveyed the alteration in herself, coming back on tip-toe. The words, "an' a purty face o' yer own ye have!" were racing through her head; but

the idea they conveyed was too sudden and wildly original to be accepted at once as the truth. And yet, when the rest of the world was changing so fast, why should not she change too? When her head was covered with shining braids she was still more a wonder to herself. Where had this beauty come from? Could mere soap and water, coloured calico, and the motherly woman's nimble fingers, work such a miracle?

She stayed all day at the tidy cottage, being afraid to go back to the Rooneys. After sundown she set out, asking her way to the Widow Conneely's. It was a long walk, and she arrived with her cheeks in a glow. John Haverty was smoking his pipe as she came up, and he did not know her.

"I've come," said she.

"Why," said he, "you're never the singin' girl that was with the thramps last night?"

"I am," said Molly, enchanted, but alarmed at his not knowing her. "You promised to tell me what to sing."

He beamed on her with his blue eyes, taking in her new appearance slowly, by a long look.

"I'll tell ye," said he, putting his pipe in his pocket.

He took her in to the Widow Conneely. He placed her in a seat apart, a little brown stool, set up in a deep window-seat, with a strip of dark-green curtain by her shoulder, and the remains of the sunset barring the little window-pane with gold beyond her. It was by accident, of course, that these things arranged themselves so as to make of her a pretty picture for the unconscious pleasing of uncultivated eyes. But there she sat, entitled to respect by the deference that Haverty paid her.

The people had not gathered in for the dance; only a few old men and women were there; the piper had not yet come. Haverty sat with one leg across the end of a table, talking to Molly, getting her to sing over verses of songs for him, and deciding which she was to sing for the company. Molly's eyes and cheeks grew brighter and brighter, and her voice richer and sweeter; as the dusk deepened, the golden bars faded away behind the pane, and the red light from the turf fire drove the shadows into the corners of the cabin, and fell full across John Haverty's eyes, which were watering as only an Irishman's eyes can water at music.

"Yer made o' the right thrue stuff," said he, "or yer singin' tells lies on ye. A man might be happy that had you chirpin' like a cricket by his fireside, avourneen! Look at me, asthareen, an' thry could ye like me. It's not long since we saw each other first, but I'm not a bad fellow if you can take the soft side o' me, an' I never seen a girl that could take the heart out o' my body before."

Enter the piper, followed by a troop of noisy young men and women.

If Molly's answer had been forthcoming it would have been lost in the storm of greetings that followed. As it was, she sat silent and red-cheeked, and Haverty was dragged away by a band of companions. Now

the piper began to play, and the dancing commenced, while a small table was placed to one side of the fire, with some pipes, tobacco, and whisky;—for what purpose did not appear. When Molly looked up, Haverty was dancing gaily with a pretty girl in a light print dress and blue ribbon, with smooth fair hair, and saucy eyes, and a coquettish air about her. People watched the pair with interest and admiration. Both were young, good-looking, and capital dancers. They seemed made for each other and for the jig they were footing. The girl seemed fully aware of the admiration she excited, and coquetted openly with her partner.

"Then they're the handsome pair!" cried one near Molly.

"Ay, throth!" said another; "it's a wonder the ould men isn't come to make up the match."

"Ould blood is slow; but it 'll not take them long in the doin' when they do go at it. Both o' them's rich enough to make the young people happy."

"What is it?" said Molly, touching her neighbour's elbow.

"Oh! it's John Haverty and Katty Nee that's to have their match made to-night. You don't know, bein' a sht ranger. That's them dancin' to others. They'll be married at wanst, I believe, as soon as the bargain's made."

Molly stared at the dancers, and then at the speaker, and took it all in. This was his match-making—that was what he had called it—only he had not said it was his own. It had all been arranged long ago, and he had been laughing at the poor tramp. Molly's head fell back behind her little strip of curtain.

"I do think that sht range girl's sick in the corner, there," said some one by-and-by.

"No," said Molly, wiping the cold drops from her face with the corner of her nappekeen; "but it's very warm. Will you give me a dhrink?" Habit is second nature; and Molly's habit of patience was strong.

Two men came in just then, who were received with marks of great respect. One was a white-haired old man, the uncle of John Haverty, the richest farmer in the country; the other was the drover who had lost his coat in Dublin, and the father of the pretty bride in prospect, Katty Nee. Ah, Molly! "The fox may run, but he's caught at last."

The men sat down at the table which had been prepared for them, and smoked their pipes, and laid their heads together. A lively discussion soon began between them, and the pipes were often taken out of their mouths, and the table was often thumped; neighbours looked on with admiration, and listened in awe. By this time, the piper, who had been sipping out of a glass by his side, began to doze over his pipes, which grew inarticulate in their utterance, then silent. The dancers were still, and there was an outcry for music: a general demand for Molly, the singing-girl, to lilt up a jig from the corner. So Molly sang many a mad merry jig and whirling reel, only now and again breaking down with a gasp for breath,

while Katty and Haverty danced wilder and faster, and the lookers-on laughed and applauded, and the piper woke up and grumbled, and the people said Molly had a jewel of a voice. God bless her!

But at last John Haverty's uncle got up with an oath and dragged his nephew out of the dance and over to the table by the arm. The dancing stopped in a moment. Molly's tune fell from her lips; the young men smiled to each other and shrugged their shoulders; the girls opened their eyes wide, and plucked each other's skirts; the old women groaned and flung up their eyes to the cabin rafters; the old men cocked their ears and shifted their feet on the floor, as they were used to do on Sundays when preparing to listen to the sermon. Every one expected that something important was going to be said regarding the business of the night.

"It's time ye stopped yer jiggin' foolery," said the old man, angrily, "an' took a thought o' yer own business. Here we've settled all—land, sheep, house, an' everything, an' there he's stuck fast in the black cattle, an' sorra an inch 'll he budge for me. Sit down there an' make yer own match, for divil a finger more I'll meddle in't."

"I want you to make no match for me," said the young man, gravely, "an' I tould ye that, last week. I tould it to Darby Nee, too, but nothin' would do you an' him but ye'd have a match-makin' here to-night. It's all yer own affair, an' if ye've fought over it ye can settle it between ye. I've no hand in it. Katty Nee's a purty girl, an' a good dancer, an' many's the jig I danced with her; but I never axed her to be my wife, an' I never will. She doesn't want me, an' I don't want her. She has a sweet-heart here to-night, lookin' as sour as butter-milk because his farm isn't as big as mine, an' she'd rather have his little finger than my whole body an' sowl, wouldn't ye, Katty? An' for my share," said Haverty, looking back at the window, "seein' that this was to be my match-makin', I thried a little business for mysel' an' I think my match is made; at least, it only wants wan little bit o' a word to finish the bargain. Come out here, avourneen!" said he, stepping up to the window, and drawing Molly into the light, "an' tell outforenent the people if you can take me for a husband."

The people looked surprised, but not so much so as might be expected. Such sudden "matches" are more common among them than longer courtships.

Molly felt that it was like certain death to cross that floor and face Darby Nee, yet, to save her life, she could not have resisted that hand drawing her on.

"A common thramp from Dublin!" stuttered the old uncle, furiously.

"A beggar, instead of my girl with her fortune!" shouted the bullying drover.

Molly, pale and cowering, clinging to Haverty's arm, lifted her eyes with the old fearful look that was common to them in Dublin, and the drover, fixing his fox-like eyes on her, recognised her in a moment.

"Oho!" he cried, "oho! A Dublin thramp, did ye say? Faix, an' we didn't know what fine company we were in! I think you an' me has met before this, young woman. A thief, neighbours," he went on, his voice rising with his anger as the remembrance of his wrong came fully back upon him; "the very thief that stole the coat I was tellin' ye of, in the pawn-broker's shop in Dublin. Then I wish ye good luck o' the wife ye have picked, Misther Haverty. Dacent girls isn't good enough for ye, so ye have one that'll do ye credit!"

Molly never heard Haverty's answer nor the murmurs of the people, for at the first word of accusation she shot through the crowd and disappeared from the door.

When the motherly woman got up next morning and began to bustle about her tidy cottage, she found her "turkey red" hanging on a pin behind the kitchen door, and Molly's old ragged gown that had hung in its place gone. Trembling with agitation, she counted her half-dozen tea-spoons, and felt that her "stocking" was safe in its nook up the chimney. Then "thank God," said the motherly woman, "I knewed she was dacent, but she might ha' said good-bye to a body, an' not come slippin' in an' out in the night, like a sperrit!"

That was the last that was heard of Molly. John Haverty refused to believe what the drover asserted, and swore before all the people that it was a calumny. The Rooneys having passed on from the place, there was no one to bear witness against Molly's character, and nothing to prove her guilty, but her own sudden flight. Haverty had the river dragged, rode to the neighbouring villages, and inquired at the cottages on the roadsides, but not a trace of Molly was found.

Two years passed, and the facts of Molly's appearance and disappearance in the district were told as a romantic story, and Haverty was pointed to as the young man who had been so "quarely crossed in love." Nevertheless, his farm was thriving, and his uncle, who had long since forgiven him for falling in love with the tramp who had so considerably taken herself off, did not despair of making a capital match for him yet, though Katty Nee was married.

Meantime, the earth had not swallowed up Molly. She had rushed to the river first, but when she stood on the brink of the water and saw the sun rising above her head, she felt that after all death was worse than anything that had happened to her yet. She wandered at random, with much fatigue and suffering, through deserted paths in the hills, till she made her way at last to the dwelling of a herd who lived at the other side the brow of the tallest mountain that looked on the valley where so many strange haps had befallen her in so little a space of time. Here she arrived opportunely and was hired as a servant, and here she remained.

Molly worked well and learned many things; her employers were friendly and found her work. They were perched up so high on the mountain that they seemed to live beside the sun; the air they breathed was so sweet, and the active life they led so healthful, that Molly grew strong in body and cheerful in mind, and could romp with her master's children, and mock the larks with her singing, for the children's delight. By winter-time she had spun herself a peasant's dress of crimson flannel, with knitted blue worsted stockings for her feet.

The third year had begun, when on an autumn day John Haverty walked the hills with his black-thorn in hand, seeking this herd who had charge of many cattle, wanting to put a flock under his care. Coming round a heathery rock very high in the blue air, he met Molly face to face, coming along the narrow path with a bundle of purple heath on her shoulder. Molly herself, but bright, sunburnt, and buxom, hardly a trace of the old Molly left to know her by.

"Molly!" cried Haverty.

"Yes!" said Molly.

He caught her hand in delight.

"No," said Molly, drawing it away, and with a proud lip. "Ye mustn't shake hands with a thief."

"Look here!" said John. "Do ye think I ever believed you lyin' ruffian?"

"It was no lie, though," said Molly, hanging her head. "It was thrue."

"Whisht! Avourneen," said Haverty. "An' what if ye did? Is it for the stalin' o' a rag o' a coat you'd make such a murther, an' you hungry, or—or somethin', I'll be bound?" he added, hesitatingly, with a pathetic look of appeal to her for a justification of herself.

"I was starved!" sobbed Molly, "an' my father was dyin' an' callin' for what I hadn't to give him. I never was taught any betther, but I've saved up the price o' the coat, all my wages these years, an' you'll give it to him, plase, when ye see him again. An' when you talk to yer wife about me, don't call me Molly the thief, nor Molly the thramp, but just a friend o' yours that ye were kind to when she was in trouble."

"I have no wife," said Haverty, "an' I'll never have wan but you."

John Haverty had his will, for they were married the next morning on their way home to the snug farm-house in a nest of trees where Haverty lived with his mother. Darby, the drover, was paid to hold his tongue, and no one else dared believe a word against Haverty's wife; and Haverty's wife and the motherly woman are bosom friends.

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